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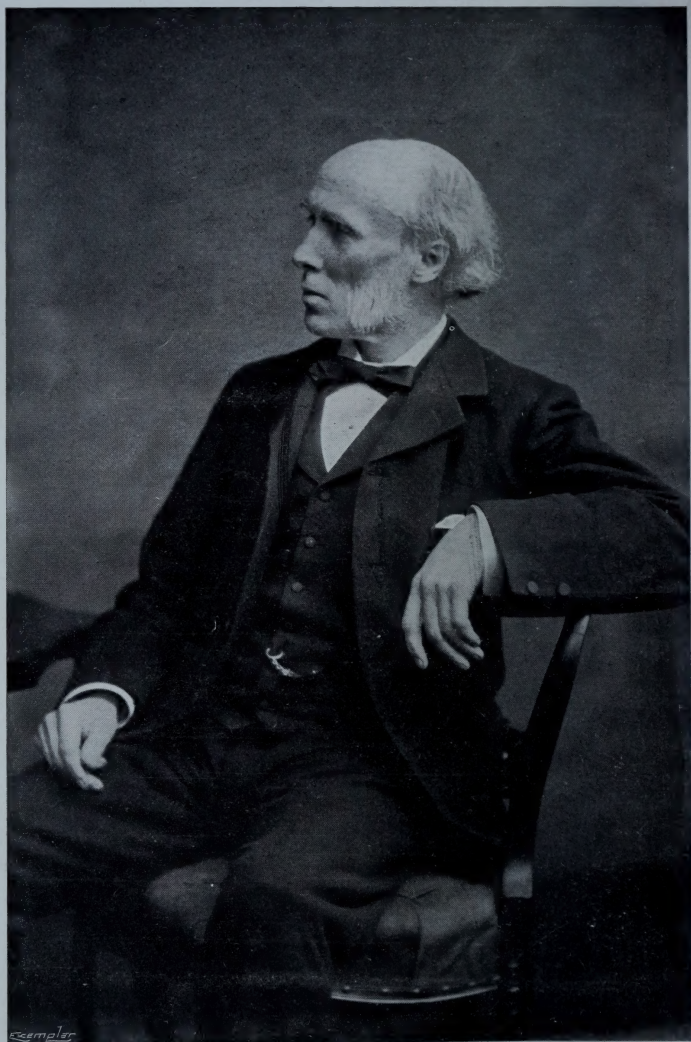
Blairgowrie, Stormont, and
Strathmore Worthies

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Yours Sincerely
Henry Dryden

BLAIRGOWRIE,
STORMONT,
AND
STRATHMORE
WORTHIES.

BY
HENRY DRYERRE,

Author of "Love Idylls, Ballads," &c., &c.

FIFTY-ONE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES, FORTY-FIVE PORTRAITS, &c.

BLAIRGOWRIE: HENRY DRYERRE.
PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER.
EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES & CO.

1903.

TO
ROBERT FORD,
POET AND LITTERATEUR.

MY DEAR FORD,—Very much to your surprise, I have no doubt, but for my own long designed gratification, out of respect for you as a writer, out of friendship for you as a man, and for the sake of one who is gone, I inscribe this volume, with the best wishes of

Your affectionate Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Blairgowrie, October 1903.

ROBERT T. ROY

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THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE
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PREFACE.

IT would be impossible to detail here the many obligations from friends all over the country the Author has been put under in writing the following articles ; but he must express his special indebtedness to the late Mr William Davie, Dunkeld, and the late Mr Alexander Lowson, Governor, Forfar Poorhouse ; also to the Rev. James Fleming, M.A., Kettins Manse, Coupar Angus ; the Rev. George C. Baxter, M.A., Cargill U.F.C. Manse ; Mr Rolland J. Miller, sub-editor, " People's Journal " (the article on " Uncle Tom," page 145, is from his pen) ; Mr John Smith (" Auld C." and " Edina "), Alyth ; Mr William Young, Carrick House, Barnhill, Perth ; Mr William Dickson, artist, Blairgowrie ; Miss Spindler, artist, Edinburgh ; Mr W. McCombie Smith, F.S.A., Persie Schoolhouse ; Mr P. Dewar, Cleaves, Blairgowrie ; Bailie Jack, Dunkeld ; Mrs Whitwell, St Leonards-on-Sea ; Mr D. Lamont, assistant secretary, Y.M.C.A., Newcastle-on-Tyne ; Mr Robert Ford, Glasgow ; Mr J. S. Marshall, Carnoustie ; Mr A. F. Mackenzie, photographer, Birnam ; Mr James Isles, J.P., F.S.A., St Ninian's, Blairgowrie ; and Mr J. D. Petrie, The Pharmacy, Blairgowrie. Lastly, he begs to thank the proprietors of the " People's Journal " and the many subscribers by whose aid and largely at whose request the articles have been republished in their present form.

BLAIRGOWRIE, *October 1903.*

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HENRY DRYERRE :

POET, JOURNALIST,

MUSICIAN, &c.

By Robert Ford.

(Reprinted from the "People's Journal.")

Prompted by natural desire, the question of late has been so frequently asked, "Will not the writer of the 'Strathmore and Stormont Worthies,' as he so well deserves, himself take rank in the printed series?" that the ever-wise and considerate editor of the "People's Journal" has written and asked if I will gratify his numerous readers with a brief sketch of the interesting career of the foremost "worthy" of us all, to close fitly what has proved a long and highly popular catalogue of local life histories. This, it is scarcely necessary for me to say, I have great pleasure in doing, and that ere yet I know whether or not the subject in his profound modesty will approve of the suggestion.

When such as he has meted out to so many others, however, comes to be meted out to himself, he surely cannot with good grace complain. Besides, any compactment of Perthshire worthies of one character or another which did not embrace some account of Mr Henry Dryerre, poet, journalist, smatterer in languages, critic, librettist, composer, &c., were not less absurd than—to use a common simile—would be a production of the play of "Hamlet" which did not embrace in its cast a personal representative of the rueful Dane, the unravelling of whose character is the dominating feature of the drama.

Mr Dryerre is a gentleman, indeed, of whom all who know him intimately are bound to speak well; and so various are his gifts, and so true is it that he touches no art which he does not

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

adorn that, since he came before the public many years ago, he has been a man of distinct mark in the wide and populous community in which he resides. For any man particularly to enter Blairgowrie as the friend of Henry Dryerre it means that he shall have

A HEARTY WELCOME

to every fireside. But such is no marvel. The wonder would be rather were it otherwise; for in Blair he is associated with every good work, and with every scheme which aims at the amelioration of the multitude. Unobtrusively, and without show, yet grudging no effort, he is, indeed, a genuine lover of his kind, who is striving constantly to discover what is best in everybody; believing as he does, and as I have heard him say, that every soul on earth is better than he or she appears, and deserves better than he or she gets.

But it is less of his graces than of his gifts that we have to treat in this limited space, and so manifold are the latter that even they must be named without elaboration; for to state the few things which Mr Dryerre cannot do, or has not attempted, were an easier task than to enumerate all that he has set his mind to and done well. And, besides, the reader will first of all desire to know something of his personal career.

Well, then, be it known by all whom it may concern that Mr Dryerre, though of Scottish birth and breeding, is of German extraction, on the male side of the house at least. He was born in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, on the 16th of April 1848. Ten years later his father joined the 72d Highlanders, and the family removed to Aberdeen, from which town in a short time they went with the regiment to India. In India Henry commenced his apprenticeship as a compositor in the regimental

Henry Dryerre, Blairgowrie.

printing office, of which and its associations he cherishes in this hour many pleasing as well as some exciting memories. Before he had time to master the intricacies of his adopted handicraft, his father (in 1863) was invalided home, and the family moving with him and settling down in Perth, Henry finished his "time" here in the Old Ship Close with Mr Robert Whittet, printer and poet, now, and for many years, of Richmond, Va., North America, than whom, he says, he never met a more sympathetic, tender-hearted, and considerate master, or one with purer and loftier aspirations, and with more ability to fulfil them. "He was virtually a father to his boys," says Mr Dryerre, "and I am one of the boys yet, corresponding with him regularly." Two who were his fellow-apprentices are Mr William Young, Carrick House, Barnhill, Perth, for many years manager to Mr Leslie, printer, Perth; and Mr Robert Donn, manager of the news printing department of Messrs John Leng & Co., Dundee.

In Perth, besides, in his early career, he became happily associated with the Evangelical Union, or Morisonian body, under the Rev. William Adamson (now Dr Adamson, of Windermere), a man of great dialectical ability, who has encountered Bradlaugh and Holyoake, and other giants of debate on public platforms. Mr Adamson conducted a theological class regularly every winter, in which such high themes as "The Fatherhood of God," the "Origin of Evil," and "Universal Redemption," were discussed and debated; and to this connection he traces much of the distinctly metaphysical bent which is one of his strong characteristics. He owes much also to Dr Adamson's successor, the Rev. Robert Finlay, the present amiable pastor of what is known now as the Congregational Church, Perth.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

In 1870-1874 Mr Dryerre was in London, where after working for a time "at the case," he acted as head reader on a daily newspaper. Night work, however, acted injuriously on his health, and necessitated his returning home. Resuming work in the Fair City, he occupied

HIS SPARE HOURS

in writing poems, tales, and sketches for the press and in teaching music and perfecting his knowledge of the French, Latin, and Greek languages. Here also he wooed and won his fair, dear, and ever bright wife, Miss Jessie Meldrum, a native of Wolfhill, the sad loss of whom after a lingering illness, he was recently called upon to face—a loss which must have proved a trial about as sore as he was able to endure, for how much they were to each other only themselves and their very intimate friends and their Creator knew.

Removing thither in 1878, Mr Dryerre has now been exactly a quarter of a century in Blairgowrie, where most of that time he has been established in business as a music-seller and stationer, but where in addition he has been a teacher of music, shorthand, and languages: has made occasional violins (he plays the violin and 'cello); acted as reporter for the "Dundee Advertiser," "People's Journal," and other papers—writing sketches, poems, and stories for monthly and weekly periodicals, composing songs and setting them to music, &c. His active mind and ready hand, indeed, have been kept constantly busy, and he has found his rest only in change of occupation. For many years—if not so still—he acted as Secretary for the Blairgowrie Horticultural Society. For a like period he has been Vice-President of the local Choral Society. From 1878 till 1886 he acted as precentor, and with much acceptance, as I happen to know, in the Parish Church of

Henry Dryerre, Blairgowrie.

Kettins, walking or cycling to and fro every Sabbath. Of the opera "Dora," which was produced in Blairgowrie a number of years ago, and has been performed before delighted audiences elsewhere, he was sole librettist, as well as joint composer with the genial and by no means slightly gifted Mr George Macdonald. He is besides author and publisher of a Guide-Book for Blairgowrie and district, which is particularly notable among works of its class for its literary quality.

To the "People's Friend" he has contributed much in prose and verse, writing sometimes over the signature of "Heine," but as frequently over other noms-de-plume and his own name. He has been a frequent prize-taker in the "People's Journal" Christmas competitions, both story and poem. Quite a number of his own songs, set to music harmonised by himself, have been published in separate form, including "Merry, Merry Love" and "Mother's Lullaby," which are widely known. But for one of his most widely admired lyrics I am not sure that he has ever attempted a musical setting, though it is

A BEAUTIFUL COMPOSITION,

and would really sing well. It is entitled "Come Near Me," and runs as follows:—

Come near me, dear, come near me, dear,
I have not long to stay,
And put your hand in mine, my dear,
In your old way.
A little while the sun will set
And darkness fill the land;
A little and I'll feel no more
Thy dear, dear hand.
Though I have sorrowed many a day,
Love pays for all and more;
And don't you weep for what, my dear,
Is nearly o'er,
Thank God, is nearly o'er.
Bend down a little closer, dear,
And raise my head—just so;
Before another hour, my dear,
It will lie low.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

And put your hand upon my brow,
'Tis thus I'd like to die—
I said I could not go, my dear,
And you not by.
You'll stay a little while, my dear—
Bend lower still, still lower;
And don't you weep for what, my dear.
Is nearly o'er,
Thank God, is nearly o'er.

Dear, how I loved you all along,
Through evil times and good,
Since when we spoke and kissed our last
Down in the wood.
Those angry words—those angry words—
Why did you heed them, dear?
One little kiss before I go—
He need not fear,
He need not fear though love is love,
And love for evermore,
And don't you weep for what, my dear,
Is nearly o'er,
Thank God, is nearly o'er.

The shadows lengthen on the wall,
O weary heart and weak!
Let me lie down to rest, my dear,
I cannot speak.
There's a withered rose beneath my head,
A tress of hair you know;
I wish thou'dst kiss me once again
For long ago.
I cannot see—where are you, dear?
The sun is surely set:
How dark and cold! Come near me, dear,
The dew is wet.
There's a withered rose and a lock of hair,
And the happy ring you wore;
And don't you weep for what, my dear,
Is nearly o'er,
Thank God, is nearly o'er.

It must have been especially gratifying to the author of these tender and beautiful lines when recently, in a letter which he received from the famous

DR ROBERTSON NICOLL,

in reply to a query about a totally different subject—and the first he ever addressed to him—the busy editor of the “British Weekly” said he knew nothing about the matter in question, but he knew of a poem beginning—

Come near me, dear; come near me, dear,
I have not long to stay—

which was written by one of the name of Dryerre—it was over 30 years since he saw it—but if he was the author he should like to shake

Henry Dryerre, Blairgowrie.

hands with him. The excellent piece—song or poem, as you like—I should say, is included in Mr Dryerre's handsome volume, "Love Idylls, Ballads, and Other Poems," published in 1884, and which embraces well over a hundred poems and songs which are scarcely less captivating and entrancing. The reception given to the book by the critics on its appearance, I remember, was, as it deserved to be, of the most encouraging character. Speaking for myself, I must say the volume ranks among half a dozen of its kind that I can return to more frequently with delight than to the many hundreds besides in my possession.

His poetry Mr Dryerre writes with extreme fluency, composing on occasions three or four poems or songs of an evening, so that what he has published forms less than a tithe perhaps of what he has written. In the course of a letter addressed to myself many years ago, I remember, he said—"In anything I write, it is as a rule the assertion of my own genuine feelings, opinions, or fancies, my own experiences, and, in many cases, my own sufferings (lightly disguised) that find utterance in verse; and were I to lay down a rule for writing poetry it would be—Utter what is within and fear not; it will reach a heart somewhere if it comes from your own. I have no sympathy with those who talk of

POETRY AS AN ART.

The true poet, certainly, employs art as a means of expression, but the art itself is not poetry, and unless he has an impulse deeper than the mere desire to cut and carve images than the words, he is not a poet, at any rate." That is well said, and forms the text perhaps of a work which I know he is preparing for the press, and will bear the title of "Ars Poetica; a Vade Mecum for Young Poets."

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

On the question which has been raging for some time relative to the authorship of the plays generally ascribed to Shakespeare, Mr Dryerre, as is well known, is a pronounced and stalwart Baconian, and his series of articles on the subject which appeared in the "People's Friend" in the spring of 1898 revealed how he could advance better reasons for his faith than by framing absurd cryptograms, and following the bent of others in America and elsewhere, who support the same view. I should like, did space permit here, to reproduce some of the stronger and difficult-to-refute arguments for Bacon which Mr Dryerre sets forth, but the subject is too intricate to be gone into in this hasty writing, and I refer those who are interested rather to the book Mr Dryerre has written on the subject, and which should shortly appear. Surely all that has been told here reveals Mr Dryerre as a giant among his fellows. And yet the half, I am persuaded, has not been told, because the man is greater and better than his work—because he is sweeter and more lovable in his personality than it is possible for cold print to show forth.

"THE WORTHIES."

Returning to his work for a final word, I must not fail to say that of all he has accomplished, his very latest—that series of sketches which has run through the "Journal" on the "Strathmore and Stormont Worthies"—has been most generally esteemed, and will be longest cherished by the people of Perthshire, whose kindly feeling, I know, is very dear to his heart. The decision to issue a selection from them in book form is a wise one. It will prove a book, not merely for to-day and to-morrow, but for all time. Health and song for many years to genial, kindly, clever, Henry Dryerre!

**“OLD DOCTOR LUNAN,”
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



**A PHYSICIAN
OF THE
OLD SCHOOL.**

I.

“OLD DOCTOR LUNAN,”

BLAIRGOWRIE.

A man he was to all the country dear.—GOLDSMITH.

When “Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush” appeared some eight or nine years ago there was but one opinion in the Blairgowrie district as to the identity of “Dr MacLure.” It was well known that the author, Dr Watson (“Ian MacLaren”) was at home in Blairgowrie; had several uncles and aunts in the neighbourhood; had spent many a long summer day at Kinloch, at Gormack, and at Bendochy in his boyhood, and later on had even preached in some of the churches; and, it need hardly be added, knew Dr Lunan familiarly. It was nothing strange, therefore, to find the worthy old man figuring in the new author’s book. The sketch was a perfect likeness. The self-devotion, the regardlessness of pecuniary reward, the kindness of disposition, the distaste for praise or “plaister,” the skill, the pride in his profession, the occasional bluntness of manner, were self-evident transcripts from the living, active, popular personality in Blairgowrie. When told of the likeness in the book it was characteristic of the man to declare it was “a’ buff and nonsense;” but the author himself has informed the present writer that Dr Lunan, whose “hard and priceless work” and “the honesty and reality of whose character” he knew, was one of several country doctors who sat for their portrait as Dr MacLure. Well, Blairgowrie

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

folk can afford to the others the uncouth figure and checked trousers, but everything else belongs to "Old Doctor Lunan," of Blairgowrie.

ROBERT LUNAN, SURGEON

—to give him his correct title—was born at Kinnettles, where his father was minister, in 1813. He served his apprenticeship with his uncle, Dr William Smith, who was also Provost, in Forfar. He used to recall with a chuckle how one of his jobs was to pound down some old broken tombstones which his master had got hold of in order to make grand "marble mixture" for infantile diarrhoea! He studied at Edinburgh, and walked the Infirmary when Dr Knox, of Burke and Hare notoriety, was anatomist there. He afterwards sailed to Baffin's Bay and other Arctic parts as surgeon on board a whaler, and was always very fond of the sea. One of his earliest planned voyages never came off; if it had, he would never have planned another. He and a companion had arranged to sail from Leith to Arbroath, but overslept themselves, and lost the boat, which was lost altogether. As it was, old Father Neptune had a nice collection of medical literature added to his private library, the adventurers having sent off their books in advance.

COMING TO BLAIRGOWRIE

in 1836 he was 23 years of age, and one of the finest-looking young fellows ever seen—over 6 feet 2 inches in height, with fair hair and complexion, swank, cheery, and active, with a bright smile and ready joke for every one he met, the very embodiment of health, and hope, and helpfulness. His coming into a house was like the "sun itself in the heavens," and in a very short time no figure was more familiar than the

“Old Doctor Lunan,” Blairgowrie.

young surgeon scudding all over the district on his favourite mare. When recommended by a well-disposed residenter to flit, as Blair was well off for doctors already, he replied—“See here, sir, I’ve got as much as will keep me for three years though I don’t earn a penny, and three years I mean to remain.” And so he did. For 58 years thereafter—practically up till a short time of his death in the spring of 1894—he was the devoted servant of the community, not only in Blairgowrie and Rattray, but

UP AND DOWN THE GLENS

— Glenshee, Strathardle, the Stormont—anywhere he was wanted, there he was. One has only to mention the fact that during all these years he never once rendered an account to get at the heart of the man. What stories are told of his intolerance to poor people—when they plagued him for their “accoonts!” He has been known to take a pestering auld body who was ridiculously anxious to “pay her way,” by the shoulders, and push her out of his surgery door, pointing to a fine lady on the other side of the street, who, he assured her, would pay the old woman’s account! Per contra, there is

A GOOD STORY

told of a lady calling upon him one day, and asking what she owed him. The doctor made a pretence of looking up his books. After a bit he said, “Oh, ay, madam; perhaps five pounds.” “Oh, dear me, doctor, that’s far too little, you know!” “Well, let’s see,” said he, consulting his oracle again, “we’ll say £10.” “That’s little enough yet, doctor.” “Just your pleasure, madam.” “Make it £15, doctor,” and that was settled. The doctor then politely shook hands with the lady, and bade

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

her good day. After she was gone, he turned to his assistant and asked who she was! The doctor was never without capacious pockets in his coats, and many a package of tea, tobacco, beef, &c., did they carry on his journeys. His business was to make people better, and food was a good deal more efficacious than physic on many occasions. A bent old woman came into the surgery one night. "Ye'll be wantin' some medicine, I daresay." "Deed ay, doctor." "Weel, see, tak' that," thrusting a shilling into her hand, "and get a bit steak and a drink o' porter for yourself!" Another old woman reminded him she hadn't paid anything for ten years. "That's a' richt, Janet," said the doctor. "Weel, maybe," replied the old woman, "but there's ae thing ye canna say, doctor, that I ever gaed past ye!" His skill, particularly as an accoucheur, was known all over the county. He was a man of simple remedies; his famous "blue-pill" was a terror—if not to evil-doers, to bad livers!

A LOVER OF GOOD STORIES.

He was a great lover of good stories—and could tell them, too. There are many floating about, but—ahem—they do not read well in this colour of ink! There's the lady and the stiff umbrella, for instance; the recruit who did not pass; the old fiddle and the old wife. Talking of fiddles, the doctor was a connoisseur on certain lines, and possessed a number of good instruments—most of them presents from grateful patients, or their relatives. The present writer can recall with what complete satisfaction the doctor journeyed to Broughty Ferry, and there handled everyone of the small but valuable collection of violins belonging to Mr Orchar. In Drumtochty parlance—It was "a

“Old Doctor Lunan,” Blairgowrie.

michty day.” One of the most curious incidents the doctor could remember was going into his surgery one night, and, finding a fine old viola da gamba lying there—from whom he was never able to discover. He played a slow air fairly well—the “Light of other days” was a great favourite of his—but never posed as a player. As a judge of fiddles, however, his opinions were always of consequence, and he certainly had some original ideas. On fine days he used to hang out his fiddles, upside down, on an old apple tree in his garden. “Fiddles like fresh air and sunshine as much as folk,” he would declare. Fortunately, no boys happened to see them and “pap” stones at them. Then, he would weigh his fiddles once a year or so, to see what effect age was having upon them, and nothing delighted him more than to spend an afternoon—a day—a week, if necessary—trying the effect of a new bridge or soundpost. Everything about the instrument had great fascination for him, and he had all the measurements as to length, width, depth, thicknesses, height of bridge, length of soundholes, &c., &c., at his finger-ends, and usually carried a specially marked inchtape with him. His fiddles were all known by name: there was “Rosemount,” “Cramond,” “Dr Dodds,” “The Yellow Fiddle,” “Johnnie Robertson,” “The Wasp,” &c., every one of them, too, had its own history—some of them curious and interesting. The doctor was

A CHAMPION SHOT

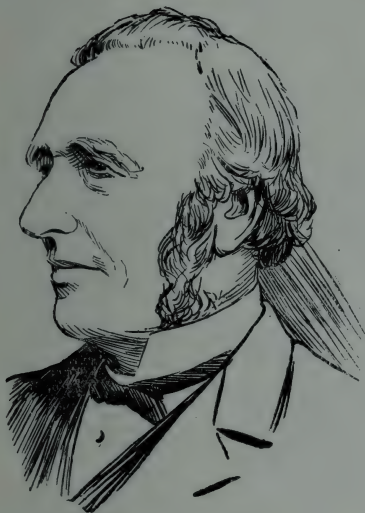
in his day, and carried off many a trophy against all comers. One of the best stories told is in regard to his great feat of nerve and skill at St Andrews in the sixties, when, after a three days’ contest, he was about to fire his last round

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

at a thousand yards, and the friend of a rival for the principal trophy rushed in, for the obvious purpose of putting him off his aim, with the information—which the doctor had studiously avoided knowing anything about—that he would require to make a bull's eye to win. This put the doctor's back up. "By George, sir,"—or something stronger—exclaimed he, "and I shall win!" He kept his word. It was probably the year after this that he was shooting at Almondbank, near Perth, and in this connection there is a curious dream story which is worth relating. It is said that one of a party of gentlemen who were travelling from Aberdeen to Perth to take part in the same Wappinschaw told his companions of a strange dream which he had had the night before, in which he had seen the winner in the forthcoming contest. He described his appearance minutely, and no sooner had they alighted at Perth Station than the tall, handsome figure of the doctor caught the narrator's eye, and he recognised him at once. However that be, the doctor annexed the trophy right enough. A keen curler was he also. The legend runs that one very hard winter an intimation was affixed to the surgery door that no patients would be visited while the frost held.

In January 1891, after 55 years of active service, public esteem found expression in the presentation of an illuminated address and a silver dinner service; together with a diamond and pearl necklet to Miss Lunan. Three years later he passed away—"the last o' the auld schule"—and Blair has been the poorer ever since. He was succeeded by his son, Dr C. S. Lunan, but the memory of the "old doctor" will "smell sweet and blossom in the dust" for many years to come.

**BAILIE STEVEN,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



**POET
AND
POLITICIAN.**

II.

BAILIE STEVEN,

BLAIRGOWRIE.

Who battled for the true, the just.—TENNYSON.
Whose words all ears took captive.—SHAKESPEARE.

The subject of our present sketch is so intimately connected with the life of the district—municipal, political, commercial, social, and educational—that to give anything like an adequate idea of his career would involve the history of Blairgowrie and Rattray, with some considerable reference to the county itself, for the past half-century—and that is not exactly our immediate purpose. In all forward movements during that long period Bailie Steven has ever been the apostle of progress. Now, with the gleaming track of the strenuous years stretching away behind him, and the red glow of the western sun on his homeward-set face, Blairgowrie's grand old man is the centre of such affectionate regard from all classes of the community as should compensate to some extent for the labours of the past and add additional sweetness to the long leisure which every one trusts is in store for him in the future.

EARLY DAYS.

He was born near Arbroath in the year 1826, his father, George Steven, being the youngest of three brothers, who were all country wrights. He came to Gourdie, near Blairgowrie, when 16 years of age, to learn his trade with his uncle,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

David Steven, estate joiner there; removed into Blairgowrie in 1843, to assist in the erection of the first Free Church, and started business on his own account in 1849. His first contract was the Congregational manse in William Street, Blairgowrie, for the Rev. Mr Tait, about which time he had also the new F.C. Manse at Lethendy on hand for the Rev. Andrew Kesson, who, with the Rev. Thomas Clark, as every one knows, was largely responsible for the Disruption. The Bailie has some lively reminiscences of Lethendy U.P. Church and its minister, the Rev. Mr Balfour. The latter was of the old school. He once preached a rousing sermon from Jeremiah v. and 8. On Sacrament days he would announce an hour's interval for refreshments; thereupon ensued a regular stampede by everybody in the congregation for the whisky tents, which were ranged up outside, and soon Burns's "Holy Fair" was in full swing. One of the tent-keepers was asked

WHAT SORT OF SACRAMENT

he had had. "Naething ava!" was the disgusted reply; "only ten gallons o' whisky and 15 barrels o' ale!" The Bailie's work as joiner is among the very best to be seen in the county, or, indeed, anywhere. His most important contract was for the palatial mansion of Blair-Drummond, erected in 1870, at a cost of about £40,000, the joiner work amounting to £11,500. Other important undertakings were Gilroy Castle, Broughty Ferry, costing about £30,000—joiner work between £5000 and £6000; St Mary's Tower, Birnam; Hallyburton House, Coupar Angus; Ericmore, Birnam; Druids' Mere, Blairgowrie; Druiquan House, Killiecrankie; Ashmore House, Blairgowrie; Kinloch House, Strathbraan; Inverhadden House, Loch

Bailie Steven, Blairgowrie.

Rannoch; Allean House, Strathtummel; &c. Of recent years, in conjunction with his son William, a number of large mansions have been erected in Ireland and elsewhere, among the latest being Glenstal Castle, near Limerick, belonging to Sir Charles Barrington. One of the Bailie's first attachments in public life was the Mechanics' Institute, of which he was one of the founders (in 1853)—all gone but himself. He has never ceased to take the liveliest interest in its welfare, and much of its present prosperity is due to his fostering care. He is still Vice-President. He entered the old Town Council in 1859, became Baron Bailie, and, with one or two breaks, ceased his connection with that body only with its demise the other day.

SOME AMUSING STORIES

are told of his predecessors in office. One of these had been on a jury for a murder trial at Perth, and returned home greatly impressed by the Judge's style. Soon after, he had to sentence a culprit, and this is how he did it—"You are condemned to be taken to Perth, there to be confined in the jail for thirty days—and the Lord have mercy on your soul!" Another fined an innocent man 5s. On the Fiscal pointing out the error the reply was, "Weel, juist mak' it half a croon!" Bailie Steven was on the first Police Commission in 1876; became Chief Magistrate two years later, and retired in 1888; on the first School Board in 1873, retiring as Chairman in 1889; served on the old Parochial Board and Road Trust for many years, and is still J.P. for the county.

AS A POLITICIAN.

Politics have always claimed a large share of his attention, and as Chairman of the Liberal

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Association he is a power to be reckoned with by both political parties in East Perthshire. But long before the division of the county was thought of the Bailie was in the field doing yeoman service for the Liberal cause. His first great fight was in 1868, for Mr Stuart Parker (L.) against Sir William Stirling-Maxwell (C.), who had represented the county undisputedly for 16 years. The result was Mr Parker's return with a majority of 279. In every other election since he took a leading part; in 1874, when Sir William recovered his seat with a majority of 495; in 1878, when, on the death of Sir William, Colonel Home-Drummond (C.) and Captain Greville (L.) contested the seat, the former getting in with a small majority; in 1880, when Mr (now Sir) Donald Currie, then Liberal, stood against Colonel Home-Drummond, and was returned with a majority of 292; in 1885 (first election after the division of the county, East and West), when Mr Stuart Menzies of Hallyburton (L.) opposed Mr Graham Murray (C.), present Lord-Advocate for East Perthshire, securing a majority of 1801; in 1886, when Mr Menzies had Mr Holland (L.U.) for an opponent, but was returned with a majority of 1309; in 1889, on the death of Mr Menzies, when Sir John Kinloch (L.) was returned with a majority of 1716 against Mr William Lindsay Boase and has retained his seat ever since, notwithstanding several contests. The Bailie has twice had the honour of presenting addresses to Mr Gladstone, of whom he is a great admirer. He first presided as Chairman at a dinner in honour of the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863; and when Earl Russell was the same year entertained to a banquet in Blairgowrie, Chief Magistrate Steven preluded that event by presenting an address. The Earl's speech at

Bailie Steven, Blairgowrie.

the banquet was a world-famous one, and has shed a reflected glory upon Blairgowrie ever since. It is when in the chair that the Bailie is to be seen at his best. Blair folks are proud of their one Chairman, and go so far as to assert a better could not be got anywhere.

“GET THE BAILIE FOR THE CHAIR!”

is the watchword for all doubtful ventures; that settled, success is assured. Great reader, as he is, with true literary taste, devoted student of Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin; clear thinker, possessed of a warm, rich imagination and expressive vocabulary, and aided by a deep sonorous voice—he never speaks but he commands attention, justifies and rewards it, his slow, deliberate utterance adding greatly to the import of what he has to say. He never fails to impress the stranger. Great has been the amusement on occasions to observe the look of blank astonishment, then dismay, which has crept over the faces of those individuals fortunate enough to be introduced by him to their audiences, as they listened to the rounded periods rolling forth, every one an aphorism or pregnant suggestion; a scathing criticism, a stirring appeal, glowing optimism—all in perfect harmony with the time and occasion. When all is said, however, the Bailie is

POET FIRST,

and everything else in a subordinate degree. His mind, “of imagination all compact,” illumines and transfigures all he does and says: not merely a poet *de jure*, either, but *de facto* as well: for he has written much, and many a heart-easing and heart-inspiring poem

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

of his is hidden away in the columns of newspapers and magazines, mostly over pseudonyms, while many more rest in the obscurity of his notebooks. A wide circle of friends and admirers live in hopes of seeing yet a worthy selection, in corporate form, not only of his poetry, but his essays and addresses—a great gratification to the present generation, and an acceptable legacy to that to come of one who, in the words of a favourite of his—

Never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph,
Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

**“OLD JOHN,”
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



JOHN MACLACHLAN

**BELLMAN
AND
TOWN-CRIER.**

III.

"OLD JOHN,"

BLAIRGOWRIE.

His hair just grizzled as in green old age.—DRYDEN.

Every one who has been present at the Blairgowrie Games on the Fair o' Blair Day will recognise an old favourite in the foregoing portrait. John steps into the ring, gives a few warning tinkles from that famous bell of his, then, in a clear sing-song tone of voice, and with a sudden drop at the end as if he had fallen off the rigging of a house, he announces the next "eetem" on the programme. The spectators listen and laugh, and cheer and chaff him; John gives back as good as he gets, and, with his "snooted" cap cocked to a side and a good-natured smile on his face, passes on to repeat his miscellaneous information for the benefit of other sections of the big gathering. John, in fact, is

THE ONE PERMANENT FEATURE—

and long may he remain so—at the games—the pivot on which the whole business of the day turns. The games, however, hold only a very subordinate place in John's career, for they are of comparatively recent origin, whereas our old friend has been clanging that bell about the streets of Blair and Rattray, and proclaiming lost dogs, auction sales, entertainments, and anything else wanted of him for over half a century—probably a record in its way. Blair is his native place, but when he first saw light in it is a doubtful point. His own idea is about

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

73 years ago, and in the cottage at the corner of Upper Allan Street and James Street. He was one of a cluster of old Blair worthies who attended the Parish School on the other side of the road—the little whitewashed cottage just below the manse. The teacher at that time was Mr Thomas Soutar, father of Mr W. S. Soutar, for many years Procurator Fiscal, writer, and agent for the Union Bank. Mr Soutar was succeeded by a Mr Leckie, who afterwards became a Free Church minister at Arbroath. John “finished” his education at John Street Parish School, erected in 1840. At the building of it an accident occurred whereby a man lost his life, the last strange words he uttered as he lay with a big stone upon his crushed ribs being, “It’s a guid thing, lads, there’s nane o’ us hurt.” This old building is now used as St Stephen’s Roman Catholic School.

AS A SHOEMAKER.

John served his time as a boot and shoemaker with Mr Robert M’Gregor, whose place of business was where Messrs Scott & Son’s cutting-room and Miss Lauder’s shop are, at the Cross. He afterwards wrought some 3½ years in Dundee, and was for short periods in Perth, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and again in Perth. It was while in the Fair City that he received a pressing invitation to return to his native place and take up the duties of beadle and town-crier. His grandfather, John, had been first bellman from 1798 till 1819; he was succeeded by his son, Alexander, our friend’s father, who died 32 years afterwards, in 1848; then came Francis Law, his son-in-law, who died within a year. John gave the matter some consideration, and ultimately bowed to destiny, set his face homeward, and took service in the double capacity on the 9th February

“Old John,” Blairgowrie.

1849, 53 years ago. When he began duties, old Mr Greig, the parish minister, whom John looks back upon as a “grand man,” prophesied of him in this comfortable fashion—

“John,” said he, “I see you are to be a very popular man in Blair; you are to be popular in the church, popular in the churchyard, and popular a’ way. My advice to you, John, is to keep from public-houses, and take care of yourself.”

“I saw he had hit the nail on the head exactly,” remarked John, “and I kept his words in mind.”

This Mr Greig was a very popular man himself, and on Sundays people would come “in droves” from Alyth and Coupar Angus to hear him.

REMINISCENCES.

One of his most intimate companions as a boy and young man was William Laird—afterwards Sir William—who was born at the Mains of Creuchie, near Blairgowrie, in 1830. He received the elements of education at the same school as John, but rather earlier—probably under a Mr Wilkie or Mr Johnstone—and started to learn the legal profession in Soutar or Whitson’s office, which is now in use as a dwelling-house and Mr Kirkwood’s tinsmith’s workshop.

Sir William never quite forgot his early days in Blair, and showed his warm side to it by giving £500 to the Cottage Hospital, and remembering the same institution handsomely in his will—his death taking place last August. Returning to John; both of the young fellows were great draughts players in their time. Many a tussle they had with each other, but both were so equally matched that odds could hardly ever be put on either of them. Laird, however, was a splendid quoit player—“The best I ever

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

saw," John asserts; "put the 'kites' down as nice as you liked, and they would not be better placed than he'd play them." He held the quoit championship for Scotland for some years, winning it near Glasgow by 2 points. He was a tall, swank fellow, and nothing set him better than to handle the "kites." John is a dapper little man, and had no chance with him at that game.

JOHN'S BELL.

A good deal of interest attaches to the bell which John uses on his rounds. According to the tradition handed down in his family, it belonged originally to the Roman Catholic Church, which in pre-Reformation times stood near the site of the present Parish Church. According to calculation, the present church (built in 1824), is the second since that period; and according to John, said bell, having been found too heavy for present purposes, was "run down" at Blairgowrie Gas Works in 1835 by Mr Wm. M'Hardy, manager there—a remarkably clever man, adept at almost everything he tried. As architect, he planned the present Gas Works; he did joiner and blacksmith work; erected meal mills, &c. To crown all, he built the present Parish Church, laying every stone of the steeple with his own hands, Mr Leslie, C.E., declaring of the work that he never saw better.

IN THE EARLY PART OF THE LAST CENTURY

there was a plentiful supply of public-houses all over the district, and many rough scenes they witnessed, judging from the stories which float about even yet regarding them. One only, of an amusing character, may be told here. This is of an inn kept by one Geordie Barty, and located about the spot where Mr Grant, chemist, now is, in the High Street. Geordie was a

“Old John,” Blairgowrie.

brother of the famous snuff-maker who erected a snuff-mill on the Lornnty, and afterwards went to Perth, where he amassed a handsome fortune, the Barty Mortification Bursaries now regularly competed for by scholars in the district being some of the good results thereof. In this inn of Geordie Barty's, Mr Thomas Graham of Newton Castle, who was afterwards to be known to the whole world as Sir Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch, and the “hero of Barossa,” used to collect his rents. On one occasion he found things rather mixed, and missed the care and attention he had been accustomed to. It was some time before Geordie himself put in an appearance. When he did so he was all apologies and regrets, and whispered to the laird that his “wife was in the strae.”

“Oh, I see,” remarked the laird, smiling; “that accounts for it. Boy or girl, George?”

“Boy, sir.”

“Very well, then, you must let me name him,” which he did, and the child was duly christened Thomas Graham Barty. He became a minister; and Sir Thomas Graham always took an interest in his career, in token of which he got him the living of Bendochy. His son, James, succeeded him as minister of the parish, and became D.D. Doctor Barty was one of the most popular men of Strathmore in his day, and was said to have been in the running for the Principalship of St Andrews, which was given to the Rev. John Tulloch, minister of the neighbouring parish of Kettins, in 1855. An amusing story is told of the latter in connection with this event. The Sunday following his last at Kettins he preached in Rattray in the forenoon and in Blairgowrie in the afternoon; on the latter occasion it is solemnly averred by those present that this absent-minded minister actually gave out the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

same text he had used in Rattray and preached his farewell sermon to his parishioners of the previous Sunday. John recalls the event himself; also other previous instances of this habit—such as standing in rapt meditation long after the bells had ceased ringing, and the congregation were waiting—requiring to have his attention called to these facts before he would awake with a start.

John does not look his age, and bids fair to see many pleasant years yet, which all his friends wish heartily. He boasts he is still able to make as good a pair of boots as ever he did, and certainly the last time we saw him in his snug little workshop he was busy on a pair which went far to prove his words.

Still, John, the time, I fear, must come,
To me, to you, to all,
When heart must stop and tongue be dumb,
And hands all helpless fall;
But keep you "lasting" every day,
And care behind you cast;
To last one's latest's all one may,
Till latest turns to last.

**Mrs BAXTER-MITCHELL,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



Mrs B. Mitchell.

**A GENTLEWOMAN
OF THE
OLD SCHOOL.**

IV.

MRS BAXTER-MITCHELL, BLAIRGOWRIE.

To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die.—CAMPBELL.

Mrs Baxter-Mitchell, of Ashbank, Blairgowrie, was a very attractive personality. It was like a whiff from an old-fashioned garden, with its wallflower and spearmint, its mignonette, thyme, and carnations, to come into her presence. Her wit, vivacity, genial human sympathies, and unconventionality of manner somehow always suggested the ideal Scots gentlewoman of a hundred years ago. She was born at Inverness in 1823. Her father, Campbell Gardner, was a supervisor of Excise in Edinburgh, where his brother was for many years City Chamberlain. Her mother was the beautiful Miss Dick of Tullymet, in whose honour Niel Gow composed his "Braes of Tullymet." The marriage was a romantic one; incidentally, it took place at midnight! It was characteristic of the young lady to jump the Keith on the Ericht ("Donald Cargill's Leap") on one occasion—the only instance, it is believed, of

A LADY ACCOMPLISHING THE FEAT.

Miss Dick's oldest sister was married to Peter M'Intosh, who started the "Muckle Mill"—the first on the Ericht; her brother, Colonel Robert Dick, was the youngest officer of that rank in the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

British Army at the time, and led the 42d at Waterloo, where he had his horse shot under him. He was made General Sir Robert after the battle, and finished his course at Sabraon. Our friend was educated at Inverness Academy, came to Blairgowrie in 1841, and was married to John Baxter in 1844 when 21 years of age, taking up home at Ashbank, near Blairgowrie, where her husband had built a mill for flax and tow in 1836. She became a widow in 1869; married James Mitchell in 1886; found herself widowed once more in 1891; and resigned life herself on the 30th August 1895 when 72 years of age. Mrs Baxter — she hardly ever got anything else even after her second marriage — was notable for an irresistible, bright, sunshiny manner, a nimble and perfectly spontaneous wit, and a gift of mimicry that could keep everyone in fits of laughter as long as she chose. She had received a liberal education, could talk French fluently, was a great reader, and had a splendid memory. It would be an easy matter to fill a fair-sized volumewith the “good things” that could be told of her, and she often spoke of writing a book of reminiscences herself, which would have been rare reading; but *fata obstant*, and

A FEW RANDOM ANECDOTES

must suffice. At a dinner party a discussion arose between Professor Stuart Blackie and another Professor regarding the name of a book, which the former held was called “Satan’s Invisible World Revealed,” and the latter thought it was “Satan’s Invisible World Displayed.” “I beg your pardon, gentlemen,” interposed our friend, “but you are both wrong. The name of the book is ‘Satan’s Invisible World *Discovered*,’” which was correct. One day she gave a grand garden

Mrs Baxter=Mitchell, Blairgowrie.

party at Ashbank, and met her guests half-way down the avenue. "You are quite 'Diana of the Ephesians' to-day," remarked one of her guests—that name having been applied to Mrs Baxter sometimes. "Oh," replied she, in a whisper, "walk a little farther on and you'll discover the Queen of Sheba in all her glory!"—alluding to a highly-dressed lady from Edinburgh who used to astonish the natives with her magnificent toilets. A lady friend from Dundee who had taken a house for the season in the neighbourhood, complained she was paying "£20 a month, and yet," exclaimed she, "look at that carpet—every bit of it mended!" "Yes," said Mrs Baxter, sympathetically, "that's what I call a darned shame." One of the

MOST AMUSING PRANKS

she ever played was some fourteen months after her marriage, when a gentleman, an old admirer, called upon her, and asked the astonishing question how many children she had. The young wife answered quite demurely, "Three." "Dear me," exclaimed he, "I should like to see them." "So you shall," was the reply. Accordingly, skipping out of the room, she returned with her only child, a boy of about four months, who had just been put in short clothes, and he was duly admired. "What about the others?" asked the visitor. "All in good time, *mon ami*!" Leaving the room again, in a twinkling she had her infant out of his clothes, hair divided down the middle, pelisse and hat on: *voilà!* her little girl going out with the maid. More admiration from the visitor. Then, out again and another quick change into long robes, cap, and shawl, and there was the baby just awakened and crying lustily! It was only when

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

he found himself the laughing-stock of the district that the poor fellow realised how he had been hoaxed. Mr Baxter himself was frequently the victim of her jokes. One day she dressed herself in an old-fashioned gown and hood of her grandmother's, and, representing an old lady from Meigle—her husband's birthplace—got her maid to announce that "Mrs Mattin" was in the drawing-room. Mr Baxter came in, expressed his delight at meeting her, asked about every one in Meigle, invited her to dinner, and went out to get her some refreshments. Off went the hood and veil, down came the curls, and the old lady of eighty was

THE MISCHIEVOUS YOUNG WIFE

once more. Mr Baxter's astonishment when he returned and found the transformation may be imagined. Our heroine could never let a chance pass of playing off some of her frolics. While on a visit one day to her old aunt M'Intosh, that lady, who was more familiar with Gaelic than English, asked her to read a letter which her daughter-in-law had received that day. Her dutiful but lively niece proceeded to do so in her own way—the writer asking all about the old lady's health, hoping that "she was as young and good-looking as ever," &c., &c. — so that the good old soul was perfectly charmed, and got her daughter-in-law later on to read the letter "once, once again"—only to discover that not even her name was mentioned in it from beginning to end! She had a perfect knack at paying compliments. Meeting a highly-dressed young man coming sailing down Allan Street, she exclaimed—"Dear me, George, is that you? I declare I thought it was the Marquis of Tullibardine!" "That's one young man at least

Mrs Baxter=Mitchell, Blairgowrie.

happy for a day," she confided afterwards. Making a call upon a young lady who had just been married for a second time, but whom she had never met, a rather plain-looking lady—except for her eyes—received her. "Are you Mrs C——?" "Certainly not," was the somewhat indignant response. "Well," remarked the suave visitor, "all I have to say is that if she has as fine eyes as yours there's no wonder she has married her second husband!" which made a young lady, this time, happy for a day. An amusing incident took place once in a Paris hotel. She was giving orders to the waiter, in French, of course, when, in her usual tricky manner, she interjected the Gaelic word "gresort!" ("quick!"). It was funny to see that thoroughbred French waiter shoot out astonished eyes and

ANSWER HER BACK IN GAELIC!

It turned out he came from Pitlochry, within whistling distance of her mother's birthplace! Mrs Baxter was a beautiful dancer; her old master—one of the great Napoleon's refugees in Inverness—used to lament she had not been trained for the opera. Nothing pleased her better on a summer evening than to get her grandchildren out on the lawn and give them a dancing lesson. Never a strolling fiddler or band of musicians but came to know they could always rely upon a hearty welcome at Ashbank. During the fifty-one years she was there it is doubtful if she ever sent a single beggar away empty-handed; she could not pass one on the road without a cheery word and smile, whatever more. One of her favourite couplets was—

The heart that is soonest alive to the flowers
Is always the first to be touched by the thorns,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

and nothing could describe her own nature better. And two things she never jested about—death and religion—"two solemn realities."

A couple of days before her death this wonderful old lady danced the steps of a Highland reel at a party in her own house. Life went out as suddenly as an electric light, with hardly a flicker, and the chambers of some lives at least have never been properly lit since.

**ROBERT ROBERTSON,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



**OLD TOWN CLERK,
BANKER, &c.**

V.

ROBERT ROBERTSON, BLAIRGOWRIE.

The subject of the present sketch is a native of Blairgowrie, so was his father, Alexander, and his grandfather, Robert; and from grandfather to grandson—a period of over a century—the family have had much to do with the control of public affairs, and “from precedent to precedent,” with wonderful regularity, have handed on the offices which each has held in turn. Mr Robertson’s grandfather was appointed agent for the Western Bank on 17th August 1832—the first in the town, the Commercial starting within a week afterwards in Brown Street under Mr James Anderson. Alexander Robertson, son of foregoing, was born in 1813, and became joint agent with his father when the Western Bank was incorporated in 1838 with the Bank of Scotland. He was bred to the law, and held the office of Town Clerk for many years, retiring in 1879, and dying in Edinburgh ten years later.

THE TOWN CLERKSHIP,

bank agency, legal business, &c., passed on to his son, Mr Robert, who, in fact, had been joint Clerk since 1862. Of the curiously abnormal position which Blairgowrie held with respect to having two municipal bodies—Town Council and Police Commission—in operation since 1876, each independent of the other, and to some extent

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

antagonistic to each other, it is unnecessary to say more here than that the Court of Session in Nov. 1901 decided that the former should give way to the latter, and the closing obsequies took place on 14th December, when the books, &c., were handed over to the new Town Council by Mr Robertson, who had guided the affairs of the old one as Clerk for 40 years. He was born in 1840, and was educated at Blairgowrie, Perth, and Edinburgh. Besides this long spell as Clerk to the Town Council, he acted in a similar capacity for the Police Commission from 1876 till 1893, when he resigned, and has been Clerk to the School Board since its initiation the same year as the former body. From his long family connection with official life, it is only to be expected that Mr Robertson should have many interesting reminiscences to relate. Up till 1873 there were only one Bailie and four Councillors, all elected by the "burgesses," and the "Bailzie o' Blair" was the most important personage by far in the whole district—in his own eyes at any rate.

THE CANDIDATE

for the coveted honour, however, who wasn't willing to canvass personally and treat liberally hadn't the slightest chance. Burgesses—who required to be feuars and to pay a fee of 15s each—being the only electors, it was the first business of a candidate to negotiate not only all the burgesses likely to vote in his favour, but all the feuars who might be transformed into good, serviceable burgesses! This meant a woful outlay on occasions. Mr Robertson recalls one big contest when over £90 was paid in burgesses' fees—equivalent to 120 new burgesses, all good men and true, most of whom were pledged to particular candidates. It is to be hoped they all voted

Robert Robertson, Blairgowrie.

"straight!" That this did not always happen may be inferred from an incident in which a late Bailie was concerned. He came to the Town Clerk to pay the fee of a certain feu, and thus get him on the burgess roll. Mr Robertson asked whether he was certain the man was entitled to be put on. "Perfectly certain," replied the Bailie; "he's a feu." "I am sorry I can't accept the fee, Bailie," said the Clerk. "How is that?" "Because," came the significant reply—"because *some one else has paid it already!*" "What!" exclaimed the Bailie furiously; "then I object to him!" Brown's Inn was kept busy. On one occasion some one appeared in the Town Hall quite openly with a jar of whisky, and invited "A' you fellows that voted for Bailie B——" to come there and "get a share o' what's gaun!" Of the Bailies themselves amusing stories are told, but the "Green Ladye" demands all the spare room at disposal.

Mr Robertson is a deeply read student of literature and science, and has hobbies various. The Perthshire Society of Natural Science claims him as a member; he is an authority on the flora of the district, is well up in theoretical optics, and possesses an acquaintance with musical statics, ancient modes, and theories of harmony which is wide and accurate. That he can also

PRODUCE VERSE

of more than ordinary merit is not so generally known; but the fact remains that to Mr Robertson we owe, amongst other things, what is probably the finest bit of ballad-writing ever produced in the district, and which it gives us great pleasure to reproduce here:—

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

THE GREEN LADYE O' NEWTON.

The ladye Jean sits in her bower,
Her cheeks are like the snaw,
She winna work, she canna play,
Sin' Ronald's gaen awa'.

"Gae bring tae me the crimson silk,
Gae bring tae me the blue,
Gae bring my siller-buckled shoon,
My satyne boddice new.

"An' busk me in my cramasie,
But an the velvet black,
My perlins fine an' gowden kame,
To wile my fause love back."

Up an' spak a grey auld wife,
Was fourscore years an' mae:—
"Licht, licht's the luve that can be coft
Wi' gowd an' buskins gay.

"But an ye be young Ronald's bryde,
A sair darg ye maun dree,
For the witchin' claith ye canna buy
Wi' the red an' white monie.

"Gae cut a bout o' the kirkyard grass,
An' a branch frae the rowan tree
That stan's by itsel' on the Gallows Knowe,
Whar they hang'd the murderers three.

"Gae twist an ell-lang rashy wyth,
An' tak' them doon alane
Tae the Coble Pule, 'tween the licht an' the dark,
An' sit on the Corbie Stane."

She has ta'en a bout o' the kirkyard grass,
An' a branch frae the rowan tree
That stan's by itsel' on the Gallows Knowe,
Whar they hang'd the murderers three.

She has twisted an ell-lang rashy wyth,
An' sits in her bower alane,
Wi' her heart in a lowe at the thocht o' her luve,
An' she waits till the day is gane.

Robert Robertson, Blairgowrie.

An' at nicht she gaed tae the Coble Pule,
The licht an' the dark atween;
An' a' that nicht, frae dark tae licht,
She sat wi' steekit een.

She hadna sat an oor ava,
Never an oor but ane,
Whan she heard the win' sough thro' the trees
Wi' an eerie, eerie grane.

An' next she heard the hoolets' cry
Within the Saughen Wud,
An' next the water-kelpies' rout
Aboon the Ericht's flood.

An' then she heard, just at her lug,
A gruesome, eldritch lauch;
An' then a voice cam' up the stream
Frae oot the Mill o' Haugh:—

“ Warlock Wabsters, ane an a',
Weave the witchin' claith;
Warp o' grass an' weft o' rash—
Weave the wab o' death!”

But aye she sat, an' aye she sat,
Nor spak' the lang nicht thro'—
She was deadly cauld, an' her heart was glad
Whan the early gor-cock crew.

An' at the dawin' o' the day,
Whan she ope'd her steekit een,
She was dinket oot frae head tae heel
In the witchin' claith o' green.

* * * * *

There's mirth an' daffin' in Newton Ha'—
The ladye Jean's a bryde;
She's clad in a gown o' the witchin' claith,
An' she stan's at Ronald's side.

“ Wae's me for you, my ain true luve,
That ever this should be;
But a mortal cauld is at my heart,
I fear that I maun dee.

“ An' I hear a soon' I heard afore,
Whan a' my leafu' lane,
Thro' the mirk midnight tae the mornin' licht,
I sat on the Corbie Stane.”

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

They hae ta'en her up tae a chamber hie,
An' sune she steekit her een;
They hae streekit her corpse on the brydal bed,
In her brydal bed o' green.

They hae streekit her oot i' the cauld munelicht,
An' tae Knockie Hill they hae gane;
They hae howkit her grave an' happit her doon,
An' set at her heid a stane.

An' every year at Hallowe'en,
That stane whan it hears the soon'
O' the midnight bell frae the Paroch Kirk
Turns three times roon' an' roon'.

An' the ladye Jean comes oot frae the mools,
An' doon tae the Newton Ha'—
Frae sic a sicht on that ghaistly nicht,
The gude Lord keep us a'!

Mr Robertson was honoured with a public banquet in the Royal Hotel on the 21st March 1902, in recognition of his long connection with the town's affairs.

“OLD GIBBIE,”

KETTINS.



MR JAMES GIBB.

**STRATHMORE
SCHOOLMASTER
AND
CURIO-HUNTER.**

VI.

"OLD GIBBIE,"

KETTINS.

He could distinguish and divide
A hair 'twixt south and south-west side.—HUDIBRAS.

The outstanding dates connected with the life-history of this remarkable old dominie are comparatively few. James Gibb — remembered familiarly as "Old Gibbie"—was born at Burnashada, Bamff (where his father, David Gibb, was farmer and "hameit weaver"), in 1794; he came to Kettins, near Coupar Angus, in 1825; was appointed Session Clerk in 1827, and elder in 1837; retiring, after 48 years' service as parish schoolmaster, in 1873; and finally departing this life two years later, on the 8th April 1875, in his 81st year, and while holding the offices of ruling elder, Session Clerk, Inspector of Poor, Registrar, and Treasurer to the School Board. In his youth he learned to weave, &c., and would take share in the "hairst" as it came round. He used to drop dark hints as to having carried malt to the smugglers on the Alyth hills, and how he never returned without a jar of "grand stuff," upon which, as often as not, "Jamie Sandy," and he would

SPEND A WHOLE NIGHT

conducting scientific experiments of a profoundly absorbing character; so absorbing, in fact, there was little of the liquor left in the morning. Later on, he is supposed to have

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

attended one of the Universities, raising the wherewithal for this by hawking jewellery and watches about the country during the summer. He first comes into notice as one of a considerable number of applicants for the schoolmastership of Kettins parish. Lord Douglas Gordon of Hallyburton, who was then laird, and something of a phrenologist, invited these all up to the House in order to have their bumps examined, and his favourable report on Gibbie's craniological development, particularly for mathematics, secured him the appointment. The method has its merits, and is commended to the attention of worried School Boards. Our dominie, it may be noted in passing, served under four ministers in his time—Rev. John Ross Macduff (1842-9), Rev. John Tulloch, who left Kettins as Principal of St Andrews (1849-55), Rev. John A. Mackenzie (1856-67), and the present universally esteemed minister, Rev. James Fleming (1868). In addition to his mathematical gifts, which were remarkable, our friend was well versed in the sciences of astronomy, geology, archæology, and meterology, as well as in the theory of music, and with a turning-lathe and a fine collection of tools, could give a very good account of himself as

AN ALL-ROUND MECHANIC.

Amongst the rest, he made very good astronomical lenses, and supplied Dr Graham, of Errol, with his. As a land surveyor he could not be excelled, his measurements being always accepted as final. As a mathematician he was held in such high esteem all over Strathmore that the late Mr Macpherson of Blairgowrie engaged him to "coach" his two sons in mathematics. He was also a good French scholar,

“Old Gibbie,” Kettins.

and had a high admiration for the great preacher Massillon. That did not prevent him, however, from being rather broad of speech, and it was only natural that his scholars should take after him. One day Dr Barty, of Bendochy, was examining Kettins School, and nearly fainted on finding that not a single boy could spell the word “poison.” “Hoots,” retorted the man who knew better, “that’s your wey o’ puttin’ it.” Then, turning to the boys—“Spell ‘poosh’n,’ billies!” Immediately out went a score of hands, while as many voices shouted—“p-o-i-s-o-n—poosh’n!” History is silent as to Dr Barty’s comments upon this exhibition of English as she was spelt in those days. Gibbie was a connoisseur of everything ingenious, curious, or valuable—particularly in the mechanical line—and would make frequent excursions not only to London but to the Continent in search of bargains—at which he was a pastmaster. On these occasions he frequently left the school in charge of the present Mr Alexander Geekie, Abbotsville, or of the late Major Buttar, Corston—both capital scholars, and ready to oblige the old man in this way. Once he bought two transit instruments, which had been lying about as lumber at Ochtertyre, Crieff, for £17. He soon put them right, and Professor Grant, of Glasgow University, hearing of them, came on post-haste, cocksure he could carry out the programme *veni, vidi, vici*, and secure them for an “old song.” He was minus £80 before leaving Kettins, and Gibbie expressed his regrets afterwards he didn’t hold out for £120! He made a shrewd bargain for a harmoniflute on one occasion. The instrument appeared to be in very good condition, but had this peculiar fault, that, whereas every white key produced a perfect

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

note, not one of the black notes would produce any sound whatever. Old Gibbie, like the famous parrot, thought much but said nothing, finally securing the instrument for 30s. He was gratified to find that his strictly private theory was the correct one—the former owner, having been an unskilled musician, had gummed paper over all the black note openings. A damp sponge, a rub or two, and *voilà!* an instrument worth £4 to £5! He made fiddles, too, and could play fairly well. Many a night he spent with his instrument at the Corston, Mrs Buttar, the best player of Scotch music in Strathmore, at the piano. But he would insist on having a ridiculous metronome ticking away during the strathspeys and reels, and thus putting everybody out of time, and tune, and temper.

He supplied the whole district with watches and chronometers, and always carried a good specimen of the latter in his pocket. The story goes that while in London on one of his runs he dropped into Benson's, the world-famous horologers, and, drawing out his timekeeper, after a critical comparison with the standard electric clock, nodded his head in its direction approvingly. "Gey near the time," remarked he. "Sir," was the indignant response, "we *are* the time!"—which was more than the Forfarshire dominie was prepared to admit, however. In appearance, he was a little man, with

A GRANDLY DEVELOPED HEAD;

shaggy brows over bright, kindly eyes; a rather finely-shaped nose, large mouth, and huge ears; a man full of humour and good stories, a first-rate fellow to pass an evening with. In business affairs, the embodiment of honesty and

“Old Gibbie,” Kettins.

trustworthiness. His apparel was generally a black dress coat, black vest, and trousers, black stock, and tall hat; and if everything he wore was not second-hand, the village gossips had not the truth in them. There is no getting away from the fact that he was atrociously close, and even miserly in his later years. He is credited with allowing his housekeeper 1½d a day to keep house with during his absences—to get “twa rows (rolls) an’ a ha’penny’s worth o’ milk!”—and inventing a contrivance to prevent the mice nibbling at his cheese. But the best story illustrative of this trait is about his calling upon Mr B——, a neighbouring proprietor, whose doctor had prescribed wine, and, after explaining that he himself was under the same regime, but found it “awfu’ deeficult to get the richt thing,” had the coolness to suggest that Mr B—— should give him some of his. Mr B—— was good natured enough to express his readiness to do so. Gibbie, accordingly, got a couple of bottles of “the richt thing,” and this is what the old sinner had the cheek to say—“I micht pay ye for the wine, Mr B——, but that would put ye in a corner, for, ye see, ye havena the leeshence (license)!”

An old-fashioned, central-fire, six-chambered revolver, without which beneath his pillow he never slept, was the occasion of several “close shaves.” One day the dominie’s valuables were being packed by Mr John Harper (now cycle manufacturer, Blairgowrie) when Gibbie was leaving the Schoolhouse to make way for his successor (the present Mr Macqueen). The old man went out, returned hurriedly, did something at one of the tables, and went out again, without saying anything. In came a ploughman, took up the revolver which he saw lying on said table, and, in the usual fatuous

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

style, presented it at Mr Harper's head, and pulled the trigger. The weapon did not go off—but that ploughman did, double quick, or it wasn't Mr Harper's fault. By and by old Gibbie returned, and going to the table, at once asked "wha had been meddlin' wi' the revolver." He was told all about it. "Just what I jaloosed," exclaimed he, "an' a guid thing for you I cam' back to draw the charges!" Sure enough, there were the six charges beside the revolver. Shortly after his death two legal gentlemen—a Mr M'L. and Mr J.—were engaged making up the inventory when the former on two successive days took up the revolver, and, pointing it at Mr J., jocularly asked how he would like to be shot. He did not, however, draw the trigger. Finally, it having been arranged that the goods were to be disposed of at M'Dowell's salerooms, Edinburgh, a young man named Meikle, while engaged packing, pointed this old demon revolver at a corner of the room, and drew the trigger. The result was a report and a fine old atlas spoiled that stood in the way of the bullet! The other five chambers were emptied outside.

Old Gibbie was found dead one morning in his chair. As might be expected, his effects were of

A VERY MIXED DESCRIPTION,

and included a large number of watches, chronometers, &c., with some half-dozen or more eight-day clocks by Ivory, Dundee. Over £1000 was realised by the sale.

He was laid to rest in the sweet little kirk-yard of Kettins, 'midst scenes he dearly loved, and where he had lived and laboured for nearly half a century.

**“LOCHIEL” CAMERON,
STORMONT.**



**“LOCHIEL” CAMERON.
STORMONT.**

**GAMEKEEPER,
NATURALIST,
&c.**

VII.

“LOCHIEL” CAMERON, STORMONT.

Honour and fame from no condition rise,
Act well your part—there all the honour lies.—POPE.

It is not every one who has such a romantic “past” as our friend “Lochiel”—a genealogy of which any one might be proud—seeing he can trace his descent from the ill-fated chief, MacIan MacDonald of Glencoe, who, with his wife and some forty of the clan, was so treacherously done to death 210 years ago (13th February 1692). The point of chief interest to us here is the fate of MacIan’s two sons, Hugh and John. According to the most likely account, these youths were from home when the massacre began at 4 A.M., but, returning to find their father murdered and devastation and ruin on every hand, they

MADE OFF UNSEEN,

and managed to get out of the Glen by secret paths with which they were well acquainted. They kept together until they reached the Brig of Buchanty, Glenalmond, where they parted, John proceeding to Monzie and Hugh to Dowally. There each settled down for a while, assuming the patronymic “Cameron,” the name of their mother, who was a sister of Cameron of Lochiel. Hugh afterwards removed to Dalpowie, near Murthly, where he kept an inn, and there he is said to have died when about 80 years old, leaving two sons and three daughters. One of these sons was named James, who had a grandson,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

John, who was the father of James, our friend "Lochiel." This John was some 40 years parochial schoolmaster at Pittensorn, near Murthly, and known far and near for his erudition and scientific knowledge. Amongst his amusements was the translation of some of Burns' and other Scots songs into Latin. James was born at Pittensorn about the year 1846, and received his early education from his father, who, being a capital Latin scholar, initiated our young friend into the intricacies of that language. Practical jokes were common in his quarter, and on one occasion he planted the tail of a dead rat in the garden of a neighbour who was very fond of anything new in plants; duly labelled it with its correct Latin term—*Cauda rodentis* (tail of a rodent)—and informed the owner of the extremely rare and precious specimen he had brought him. The old man was delighted, rewarded him handsomely, and showed off his treasure to everybody, including the old dominie, James's father, who was the cause of a bad quarter of an hour for our young joker.

LIFE IN PERTH.

He was sent to Perth to learn the drapery trade with Messrs A. & W. Macgregor, John Street, and attended night classes, reading everything he could come across—history, biography, travels, geography, natural history, botany, &c. Amongst other acquirements he mastered Pitman's Shorthand, and obtained a prize from Mr Pitman himself for his efficiency, and has kept himself abreast of the great developments which the system has seen of recent years. After a few years of town life he obtained a situation as gamekeeper, and has served in that or similar

“Lochiel” Cameron, Stormont.

capacity in many parts of the Counties of Perth and Fife, including Murthly estate, Rannoch Lodge, Drummond Castle, Abercairney, &c. He has also been several times round the West Coast of Scotland and the Hebrides on yacht cruises with gentlemen fishing and wild-fowl shooting ; and was some two years in Ireland during the Fenian agitation. Wherever he went he always kept his mind and eyes open ; and now with a splendid stock of reminiscences of men and things which have come in his way through life, has settled down as gamekeeper and fisher in his native district.

AMONGST HIS HOBBIES

has been collecting snake skins and other natural curiosities, Indian arrow and spear flint heads, &c. He is a keen and accurate observer of nature, and when Dr Gordon Stables some years ago offered two prizes for the best treatise on British birds of prey, our friend came in first against 1134 competitors. It took him the better part of three months to write the book. He has contributed frequently to the “Field” and “Fishing Gazette” and other sporting papers. As might be anticipated, he has many good stories to tell. On one occasion he was in attendance with the gaff for a gentleman who was playing a salmon in the Tay near Caputh Ferry, and who was every now and again stopping the line, in his nervousness, with a sudden jerk, by pressing the reel with his finger, thereby putting a dangerous strain upon both line and rod. The inevitable happened. The line snapped, but, quick as lightning, “Lochiel” caught the running cord before it finally disappeared, and, with a desperate 20-pounder tugging away for dear life at the other end, managed to mend it, and thus enable the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

delighted angler to land his fish after an hour's play. He relates a funny experience with a grilse. He played with it for about a mile down the river, not far from Caputh ; managed to get it to the edge, but found he was without his gaff. In desperation he tried to land the fish with his hand, but his line broke, and, making a grab at his escaping captive, his thumb went right into its eye and gave him such a hold he was able to land it all right. It scaled 9 lb. The following incident, which was public property at the time, illustrates the manner of man our friend can be on occasions. One day, with only a stick in his possession, he was attacked on the Drummond estate by no fewer than seven poachers. He managed to throw two of them, himself on top, but suffered badly about the head and person from the sticks and kicks of the others—so much so, his head had to be stitched in several places, and he was forced to bed. The rumour got about that he had been killed outright, and next day a neighbour brought the information that five poachers were already at work in a certain field with ferrets. Nothing would hinder our friend, stitched head, sore ribs, and all, from slipping on his things, and setting after the wily poachers. By and by they “twigged” him, and bolted—“Lochiel” in full chase after them, with his shoes thrown off. He overtook and closed with the two men, and, after a struggle, secured one of them. When being examined as to his taking off his shoes, Mrs Cameron remarked that, if he did, “it would not be the first time in the family”—alluding to MacIan MacDonald of Glencoe having done the same thing before he rushed into the fray at the Battle of Killiecrankie. The story is worth telling. Just before the battle

“Lochiel” Cameron, Stormont.

MacIan had a dispute with Claverhouse as to the order in which the Highlanders were to fight—the latter wanting them to act in concert with the other sections of his force, while MacIan insisted that they should fight in their own customary independent style, and pointing out how successful Montrose had been with his Highlanders so long as he adopted this method. At last the Highland chief got nettled, and demanded bluntly (in Gaelic) whether it was to be “Fight or no fight!” Claverhouse considered a second or two, then exclaimed, “In the name of God, go forward!” Thereupon MacIan threw off his plaid, slipped off his shoes, and, drawing his claymore, cried on his men to follow, and rushed forward. The rest is known; Mackay’s men could not resist the impetuous onslaught, and the fight was practically over in a quarter of an hour. It is a striking testimony to the value of “Lochiel’s” expert knowledge, and of more than personal interest, to learn that it was to this Stormont gamekeeper that

THE FISHERIES BOARD

entrusted the settlement of the long debated question whether the sprat was the young herring or a separate species. Frank Buckland, the celebrated naturalist, had decided in favour of the former theory, but his decision did not give satisfaction, and in 1878 our friend was appointed Commissioner to reinvestigate the whole matter. This he did that year at Dundee so thoroughly and conclusively that he had no hesitation in deciding for the opposite theory, viz., that the sprat is a distinct and separate species. This finding has never been seriously disputed since. In addition to his other abilities,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

“Lochiel” can use the pencil to some purpose when a sketch is required, and has written verse of commendable quality. He has a splendid memory for the men and things he has come across in his time, a conversation with him being an education in county affairs past and present ; but in manners he is one of the most modest of fellows, pleasant of speech, quiet and self-contained, withal wearing a certain air of still reserve about him that somehow suggests a lone mountain tarn with the midnight stars in its heart. He is a Celt ; perhaps, too, Glencoe counts for something.

VIII.

JAMES SANDY, ALYTH, INVENTIVE GENIUS, MUSICIAN, &c.

A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.—DRYDEN.

Of all the notables connected with the Alyth district whose achievements in one sphere or another may be considered worthy of record, there is no one who has such an all-round claim to recognition as this wonderful genius, who for the long space of over 50 years was a confirmed invalid, fast bedridden and decrepit, and who yet managed to turn out a variety of articles which for number, ingenuity, and beauty of workmanship have made his name a synonym for everything clever and marvellous ever since. "Jeemie Sandy" was undoubtedly a genius *sui generis*. He was born in Alyth in 1766, and died there in 1819. Between these dates there is not a single event which to ordinary minds could be considered outstanding; nothing but the monotonous daily iteration of a sick man's bed. But everything is relative after all, and even "Jeemie" had red-letter days all his own, amongst the most painfully memorable of which was doubtless that on which he sustained the accident which was to make him cripple for life. This, it is generally understood, was a fall on the ice, which injured his spine, when he was a mere child, and resulted in his confinement

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

TO BED FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS,

never leaving it night or day, except on three occasions—and then carried out by neighbours—when his house was threatened with fire or flood. Being endowed with a preternaturally active and ingenious turn of mind, even as a boy he began to produce a variety of articles in wood and iron, which displayed much originality and invention. He was encouraged in his efforts not only by commendation but something more substantial. As he grew older and it became a clear certainty that he was never to regain the use of his legs he settled down to make the most of the inevitable. He accordingly planned a specially constructed work table of circular form, rising some 18 inches or so above the bed, on which he fixed his turning-lathe, circular saw, table vice, cases for tools, &c., and found accommodation for the planes, drills, and other tools he required for his varied work. The table, revolving on its centre, enabled him to get at anything he wanted simply by a turn of the hand. He had also a small forge in his room, with which he

MANAGED TO WORK

in iron and brass, reaching the fire by means of long tongs. Neighbours were constantly dropping in for a crack—or a dram, for he had always a smuggled “drappie”—and from these he would get an occasional hand at the bellows, or “ca’in” the turning-lathe; but “Jeemie” had everything contrived to enable him to be as independent as possible of any such help. There he sat—in the southmost room of the present Commercial Hotel, with looking-glasses so contrived that he could see round the corners!—day after day, dressed in a loose sort of gown, in which he

James Sandy, Alyth.

is said to have slept as well, turning out with keen, active head and deft fingers the most curious collection of articles ever heard of, and always ready to respond to the multifarious demands made upon him from all quarters. The gentry round about were his best customers, but it was all the same to "Jeemie" whether an auld wife's cruisie wanted mending or a set of bagpipes had to be made for the young laird, a neighbour's "spartackles" wanted a glass, or some great astronomer from London wanted a reflecting telescope. He was equal to all demands, and nothing came amiss to his nimble hand. He was a capital worker at the lathe, and among other things constructed numerous spinning wheels, any number of "pirns" and spindles, flutes, chanters, and complete sets of bagpipes. He also made a number of turning-lathes themselves, of special construction; clocks, watches, and musical boxes—the last being remarkable for their sweetness of tone and beauty of workmanship. He even constructed a number of astronomical reflecting telescopes, the specula of which were compared by experts to those of the best London makers. There is a tradition that he made one, at least,

OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY

for some observatory in England. He was equally at home among machinery of every description, and contrived a number of improvements on lint-spinning machinery, building the old lint mill (now Illingworth & Co.'s Wool Mill) with his savings, and assisting his brother Gilbert to start in business there. He made fishing rods and reels, looking-glasses, dirks and swords, guns and pistols, rat-traps and birds' cages, pocket-knives, horn spoons, brose caups, beescares,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

candlesticks—and a host of other things, not forgetting his famous snuff-boxes, which afterwards came to be known as “Laurencekirk,” where some one started making them on a large scale. Regarding these, the story goes that some gentlemen in the district sent several of the ingeniously constructed boxes with their concealed hinge to George the Third, snuffing being greatly in vogue at the time. As no one at Court could open them, however, they had to be returned to Alyth. They were forwarded a second time, open—only to be returned once more, as nobody appeared able to shut them! His *chefs d’œuvre*, however, were his

VIOLINS AND VIOLONCELLOS,

specimens of which are to be found in Alyth, Blairgowrie, Dundee, and elsewhere. I know of one Sandy violin and ’cello, at least, in Australia. It is many years since the writer first handled Sandy’s work, and only the other day he had the pleasure of renewing his acquaintance with it. Sandy’s violins are usually Guarnerius in build, of choice wood and neat workmanship, purfled; as to colour, usually dull yellow, and covered with good spirit varnish. Above all, the tone has that satisfying firmness and “grittiness” which is the guarantee of any amount of tone to the expert player, and is “clear as a bell.” A very fine specimen of his work is in the possession of Mrs Pattullo, Commercial Hotel; Mr John Smith (“Auld C.”) has another, and thereon hangs a tale. He was at a roup, when a waste-paper basket full of rubbish was put up. Our esteemed friend could not resist the temptation, and in an instant “bang gaed saxpence,” and the basket was knocked down to him. Imagine his jubilation on discovering a splendid “Sandy” reposing com-

James Sandy, Alyth.

fortably at the bottom of the basket! Mr Smith has also the mould—an “inside” one—on which Sandy fashioned all his violins. Our universal genius was also a good draughtsman and engraver; some fine samples of his designs in stone work are still to be seen in the gardens and elsewhere about Alyth. He was a skilful performer on the violin and bagpipes. To crown everything,

THE IRREPRESSIBLE CURIOSITY

and deeply speculative character of the man led him to pry into the mysteries of life itself, and to anticipate the modern incubator by hatching chickens, canaries, mavises, and other birds by the natural heat of his body! It was no uncommon sight to find him surrounded with a chorus of singing birds, some perched on his head and shoulders, everyone of which owed to him in this way their very existence—some even the very notes which they warbled and which he had taught them! As might be surmised, he was of a social disposition, although his temper was by no means angelic—as some of the boys knew to their cost when they offended him and came within reach of his long arm—and stick. His workshop was the chief rendezvous of the village, and amongst those who met there at one period or another were Stewart Jack (latterly of Meikleour), James Gibb (of Kettins), William Duff (of Clunie), and Willie Cruickshanks (of Coupar Angus)—worthies, too, each of them. Willie was blind, and like most blind people, was in the habit of speaking about “seeing” this, that, and the other thing. On bidding Willie good-bye one day, after a visit, the Alyth wag hoped he would soon be back again to “see” him. Willie “saw” the point and had his revenge immediately by

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

replying—"Oh, ay, Jamie, and then we'll hae a fine *walk* thegither!" Burns, while at Forfar on his tour of 1787, is said to have meditated visiting Sandy, but could not find time.

"Jeemie" was so well patronised that he built not only the Lint Mill but Hillhead also—dying, however, before it was finished, on the 3d April 1819, aged 53. About three weeks before his end, this strange mortal married. He was buried in Alyth Kirkyard, and the following is the inscription from his tombstone—copied by Mr John Smith, whose hearty assistance in ferreting out all that could be learned about this wonderful man, as well as otherwise, we gladly acknowledge:—

To the Memory of

JAMES SANDY, Feuar, Alyth,

A self-taught artist of distinguished eminence,

A few of the friends of genius have erected
this monument in testimony of their admiration
of the endowments which he possessed,

Uniting an intimate knowledge of the principles of
natural science with great powers of invention,
and singular skill and elegance
in executing the most ingenious pieces of
mechanism.

He died 3d April 1819, aged 53,

having from an early period of his life been
closely confined to his couch by bodily infirmity.

In the goodness of a wise and compensating
Providence, he triumphed over the disadvantages of
an apparently helpless and calamitous condition,
being blessed with a social and happy temper,
and preserving to the last
the faculties of his intelligent mind active and
unimpaired.

Materiam Superabat Opus.

AR. CRICHTON, Sculptor.

James Sandy, Alyth.

There is a general belief in Alyth district that poor Jeemie's skull was obtained by some covetous phrenologists, and that it is deposited in some museum in Edinburgh; but all our inquiries in this direction have hitherto proved fruitless. The authorities of the Anatomical Museum in connection with the University, and in which the contents of the old Phrenological Museum were deposited sometime about 1888, know nothing about the relic.

JAMES SANDY, THE ALYTH GENIUS.

Come, Alyth muse, fresh lustre shed
Upon your ancient artist's head;
A long lifetime he spent in bed,
Yet money made;
In arts and science—ilka trade,
He skill displayed.

Wi' slicht o' hand he used the knife,
Made fiddles, pipes, an' flutes, and fife;
Roon' a' the country-side they're rife
Still tae this day;
In tone an' tune true tae the life
He weel could play.

His music-boxes, wheels and keys,
Would play a dozen tunes wi' ease;
Nane o' your German slim whee-gees,
Wi' whusslin' cranks,
But powerfu' notes the ear tae seize
An' fire the shanks.

Rods an' reels, an' clocks an' watches,
Shears an' shuttles, spunks an' matches.
Oily crusies, veneerin' patches,
An' spectacles,
Guns an' pistols, snecks and latches,
An' retic'les.

Dirks an' sowards, bows an' arrows,
Magic mirrors, wheels for barrows.
Traps an' cages, singin' sparrows,
Scapes for bees,
Model cairts, an' pleughs, an' harrows
He made wi' ease.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Fu' lang he wrocht, an' planned wi' care,
Tae mak' or mould, improve, repair,
An' ilka science received a share
 O' his rare skill;
His snuff-boxes, wi' hinges rare,
 Are in use still.

Phrenologists were tickled sore
As o'er his cranium they'd pore;
And Reekie billies were sent o'er
 Tae beg his skull—
They howked it up an' aff it bore,
 The fowk tae gull.

'Tis there an' labelled tae this day,
Varnished tae keep it frae decay;
The auld kirk-yaird contains his clay—
 Sweet be his rest,
Wi' tablet-stane o' hoary gray
 Aboon his breast.

Alyth.

AULD C.

**JOHN ROBERTSON,
COUPAR ANGUS.**



**RAILWAY PORTER
AND
ASTRONOMER.**

IX.

JOHN ROBERTSON, COUPAR ANGUS.

A man he seems of cheerful yesterdays
And confident to-morrows.—WORDSWORTH.

There is always something to be learned from the study of such a career as that of our friend John Robertson, and the fact that Dr Smiles' "Self Help," "Men of Industry and Invention," &c., have still a wide vogue proves the fascination which such biography exerts over the reading public—more particularly the young. The subject of this sketch was born at Corston, Aberlemno, in 1830. His father, who belonged to Struan, was a contractor, and made nearly all the roads in the eastern district, including the turnpikes between Forfar and Kirriemuir and between Brechin and Friockheim, and the third part of the road between Montrose and Forfar. John began the business of life assisting his father in the pavement quarries of Aberlemno, and afterwards in making a portion of what is now the Caledonian Railway at Farnell Station, under Messrs M'Gregor & M'Queen; thence he went to Craigo and wrought under the late Mr Mitchell, of Montrose. It was while here that one of

THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS

in John's life took place—namely, the delivery of a series of lectures by Dr Dick, the Broughty

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Ferry astronomer, stirring the imagination of the young man to such an extent that he was bound for ever thereafter in the meshes of the celestial science. He was greatly indebted also to a Mr Cooper, teacher in the evening school which he attended. We next find him at work at Inverurie, on the Great North of Scotland Railway, and there he remained two years. In 1854 the Blairgowrie branch was being formed, and Mr Mitchell, Road Surveyor, Perth, who had the contract, having written John's employer asking him to send a competent and reliable "gaffer" for a squad of his men, our friend was promptly despatched to the spot. That was his first appearance in the Coupar district. His first section of the line was at Draffen, about half-way between Coupar and Blair, and John recalls with what keen interest the late Mr Macpherson of Blairgowrie, through whose estate the line passes, watched all the operations, visiting the work daily and noting every detail. Although disappointed at first at John's youthful appearance, his new employer soon discovered that John had received a superior training in road forming from his father, and but for the untimely death of this gentleman before the Blairgowrie line was finished the course of our friend's life would have been in another channel. After completing the work at the north end John was given the superintendence of the large rock-cutting near Coupar Angus, which he carried through successfully. The line was opened the following year, and John, who meantime had got married, became railway porter at Forfar. His "heart was elsewhere," however, and back

HE CAME TO COUPAR,

which was to become his permanent home, in

John Robertson, Coupar Angus.

1858—"the year," John notes, as becomes an astronomer, "of Donati's great comet." Meantime he had been plodding away at his favourite study. He admits, however, that the apparition of this comet was the means of deepening his interest in astronomical science, and he tackled everything bearing on the subject he could lay hands upon. Amongst other volumes, he owns indebtedness to Dick's "Solar System" and "Practical Astronomer," Chambers's "Information for the People," Cassell's "Popular Educator," and an interesting series of articles which appeared in "Leisure Hour" by the late Edwin Dunkin, of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. It was not till 1875, however, that he managed to get a telescope of his own at an outlay of £5. Two years later he obtained his present instrument at a cost of nearly £40. It is a refractor by the celebrated firm of Cooke & Sons, York. The object glass is 3 inches in diameter, with a focal length of 43 inches. When extended, with panratic eyepiece attached, the telescope measures about 4 feet. Every spare moment now was devoted to his absorbing hobby. His hours were long—from six till six, with two hours for meals—but early in the morning, late at night, and with snippits off his meal hours, he was busy making observations and drawings of sunspots, variable stars, comets, eclipses, occultations, meteorological phenomena, &c.—checking off the affairs of the universe, in fact, in his humble little cottage and back garden in Causewayend with as much

METHOD AND REGULARITY

as he gave to his ordinary duties. That is one of the advantages, as Wendell Holmes points out, of having the hub of the universe in every village.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Notes of our friend's work began to appear, over the familiar initials "J. R." in the "Evening Telegraph," the "Scotsman," "Blairgowrie Advertiser," the "Observatory," the "Astronomical Society's Journal," and other periodicals. The late Sheriff Barclay and Professor Grainger Stewart brought him under the notice of Dr Smiles, who visited him in 1883, and wrote a notice of him for his "Men of Industry and Invention," which appeared the following year. More than one astronomer of rank has acknowledged his indebtedness to the intelligent and painstaking labours of their humble fellow-worker, and among his correspondents may be mentioned Professor Herschell, Dr Alexander Brown, of Arbroath; Dr Ralph Copeland, now of Blackford Hill, Edinburgh; Mr W. H. M. Christie, Astronomer-Royal; Sir Robert Ball, the late R. A. Proctor, &c. Against all solicitations to accept a "rise in the world," John's modesty has been proof. He declared to Dr Smiles that he was "very comfortable," and

QUITE CONTENT

to remain a railway porter—a condition of mind, as the Doctor remarked, which was "one of the rarest things on earth." John retired from railway service, however, in 1899, when he was the recipient from his many well-wishers of a beautiful marble clock and a gold watch for himself, and a gold brooch for his esteemed partner in life. Since then he has been simply revelling among the stellar infinities, but is still the same frank, genial, and interesting "John" so long familiar to the travelling public. And of course there is that phase of his activities yet to touch upon. Who that has heard can ever forget that sonorous

John Robertson, Coupar Angus.

"COUPAR ANGUS—CHANGE HERE FOR BLAIR-GOWRIE!"

which John rang out with such telling effect for 40 long years? If such there be, "Go mark him well," &c. John's style was all his own; he had no competitor in his own day, and left no worthy successor behind him. There was such a satisfying quality about that announcement; there was no getting away from the solid fact that we were at

COUPAR ANGUS.

There was no ignoring that peremptory command to

"CHANGE HERE FOR BLAIRGOWRIE!"

Odzooks! some old wives would be half-way to Blairgowrie before they remembered their destination was Forfar, they were so accustomed to do what they were bidden, and John's orders were so compelling. "Ian Maclaren" declared that Coupar Angus was the best "cried" station in Britain, and the man who could hear John call out "Change here for Blairgowrie!" and not retain it in his memory ought to have no memory, and certainly had no ear. Another cleric asserted that he could not get "Change here for Blairgowrie!" out of his ears for a fortnight after his return home; and there is another story of a passenger who, becoming irritated at the want of distinctness in this respect on the Highland line, stuck his head out of the window at one station, and shouted to the dumfounded porter—"Man, if I only had ye at Coupar Angus I'd sune tell ye whaur we were!" John's call has come to be recognised as

A SORT OF SLOGAN

or rallying-cry for all the people of Strathmore. I have heard it on the streets of London; and

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

once, at least, it was heard in Paris. Three gentlemen very well known in the district—Messrs B., G., and D.—were in a Paris restaurant, and Mr B. tendered a half-sovereign, expecting change. The waiter was making off, however, when Mr B. shouted after him in good honest Doric, “Hi, man, whaur are ye gaun wi’ that half-sovereign?” and immediately from a far corner of the room issued the inconsequent but familiar and welcome watchword,

“CHANGE HERE FOR BLAIRGOWRIE!”

The owner of the voice turned out to be a cattle-dealer from the North of Scotland, a total stranger to the others. It is hardly necessary to say that difficulty was got over immediately.

“John” enjoys the esteem and best wishes of the whole district and a much wider area in his retirement. A crack with him, more particularly in the evening, with the sky in favourable condition for a peep through his famous telescope, is always an educative pleasure.

**JAMES ALLAN,
FORFAR.**



**FIRST VIOLINIST
OF
STRATHMORE.**

X.

JAMES ALLAN, FORFAR.

As sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair.
—*Love's Labour Lost.*

Stormont and Atholl may boast their "famous Niel" and renowned "Pag.," but Strathmore swears allegiance to "Jamie Allan, of Forfar." It is a quarter of a century now since he broke his last string, but his memory is as green as ever; he is still the standard by which everything *de fidibus* is adjudged in Strathmore, and seems to have fixed for another generation at least the *ne plus ultra* of Scots dance music—Forfar style! With so many perfervid advocates about of the "Perthshire," "Aberdeenshire," "Fifeshire," and "Forfarshire" styles respectively, that reservation is perhaps necessary.

JAMIE'S BIRTH.

James Allan was born at Forfar on the 17th October 1800. His father, George Allan, kept a barber's shop not far from "Samuel Ritchie's corner," and Jamie, the boy, assisted his father for some time, and afterwards went to learn weaving with an old man, whose place was in Sparrow Croft. Neither of the occupations, however, seems to have had great attractions for our friend. The Allans have been noted for generations as a musical family. George Allan himself was reputed a good player; but the most celebrated of his time was Jamie's cousin, Archie, whose style was characterised by great fulness and clearness

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

of tone, combined with a remarkably expressive quality in the strathspeys. It was he who on the death of George Allan, when our young fiddler was about 11 years of age, and only beginning to pick up tunes, took him in hand and laid the foundations of his musical education; and there is no doubt that the style which Jamie afterwards developed was modelled to a great extent upon that of his tutor. Archie died in 1837, and by that time it wasn't more than the difference between an up or down bow which was the better player of the two. When about 40 years of age our friend resolved on matrimony, and married a widow who kept a small inn at the East Port of Forfar. His new surroundings were immensely congenial, doubtless; but to one of Jamie's free and easy disposition by no means

AN UNMIXED BLESSING.

By this time his services were in great demand all over the district; he was a prime favourite with the Earl of Airlie, and at Cortachy Castle held much the same position as Niel Gow did at Blair Castle. In 1856, Julian Adams, the indefatigable *entrepreneur*, engaged him and about 30 others, amongst whom were Duncan M'Kerracher, "Atholl's Paganini," for a three months' tour all over the United Kingdom. It was a great success. Next year another tour was arranged for, but unfortunately shortly before the date fixed for meeting Adams at Inverness, Jamie's string band got on the "spree," and the Inverness engagement went by the board. That did not hinder the indefatigable Julian engaging the indispensable Forfar violinist for another tour in 1858; but the company went to pieces at Leamington, and it was only by some friends in Edinburgh sending on

James Allan, Forfar.

train money that the fiddlers managed to get back to Scotland. Amongst other engagements he fulfilled were leading the Saturday evening concerts in the City Hall, Glasgow, for many years; playing annually at the St John's and St Andrew's festivals of the Ancient Lodge, Dundee, for over 40 years; appearing at

FIDDLING COMPETITIONS

in Edinburgh and elsewhere, and at concerts in Dundee, Broughty Ferry, &c. On one occasion in the Music Hall, Edinburgh, he played "Miss Lyall" and "Bonnie Annie" in his best style, and fairly captured the audience — one stentorian voice from the gallery shouting "Weel dune, Farfar!" and thus causing a second ovation. He used to declare he never got his "licks but ance," and that was by a blind fiddler in that very hall. "Man," said he, "whenever that lad started playing he garred my hair stan' on end!" One of his most notable appearances was in Trinity Hall, Dundee, in 1866, where his playing of the "Perthshire Hunt" fairly "brought down the house." One of the audience was so carried away by it that he could not help exclaiming to his neighbour—"Look at that man Allan; he is sending the bow across the strings like a flail!" But he was heard at his

VERY BEST IN PRIVATE,

surrounded by a small circle of kindred spirits, a dram "in his cheek," and his favourite fiddle, the "Shoe," under his chin. He knew but never boasted of his own powers, and no one was more ready than he to acknowledge real ability in others. But he was a terror to bad players. One night, a conceited but indifferent fiddler kept asking him now and then, "Don't you think, James, my playing is

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

greatly improved?" "D——d a bit!" grunted "James" at last; "and never will be! Fine loom wark—fine loom wark!" Summing up M'Kerracher, he said to one of his pupils—"He's a guid player—a capital player; but," added he, with a shrug, and waving his "flail" about, "I dinna think ye'd care muckle for that d——d Hieland diddrie-fa, wheetie-whattie style o' his !

A NOTE ON JAMIE'S STYLE.

The veteran violinist and Jamie's most distinguished pupil—Mr James S. Marshall, Carnoustie—thus compares the style of his old master and that in vogue nowadays:—"Jamie's style of playing strathspeys and reels was characterised by full tone and correct accent and rhythm; every note told, the up bow very forcible, and the speed not exceeding that of the ballroom. Of late years a new style of playing strathspeys and reels has come to the front devoid of the fine round swinging style which prevailed 50 years ago—the main characteristic of which is high speed. However clean and crisp the playing may be, the result is a mere jingle of notes—a spurious style, and absence of musical substance. One could wish to have heard Jamie's comments on same. It is a consolation, however, that the large Society in Edinburgh conducted by Mr Archibald Menzies adheres to the true old style of playing Scottish dance music, instead of giving exhibitions of mere high speed and caricaturing our 'auld strathspeys.'"

LIKE ALL GOOD FIDDLERS,

Allan dearly loved a good story, whether as listener or teller, and was full of great good humour. One of his most amusing exhibitions was the imitation of the playing of an old man in

James Allan, Forfar.

Tannadice, named David Neish, who thought he could play the reel, the "Salmon's Tail up the Water." Every other note was out of tune, and there were at least seven different degrees of speed in the rendering, which must have cost the wag immense trouble to get up. In 1869 a great "James Allan benefit concert," organised mainly by Mr Marshall, Carnoustie—Mr R. B. Stewart undertaking the part arrangements—came off in the Kinnaird Hall, Dundee. The principal players were:—Mr Stewart, Edinburgh (leader); Mr J. S. Allan, deputy-leader of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh (son of Mr Allan); Messrs J. S. Marshall, Dundee; James M'Intosh, Edinburgh (Niel Gow's last pupil); D. M'Intosh, C. M'Intosh, C. M. Baxter, R. Stevenson, and Douglas—all violinists; with Messrs J. Stevenson, Dundee, and Jenkins, Edinburgh—violas; Mr Turner, Broughty Ferry—violoncello; and Mr James Wallace, Edinburgh—double bass. The hall was packed in every part, and the concert a great success. Another "benefit" was held in the Reid Hall, Forfar, on 14th March 1873, at which M'Kerracher; M'Leish, of Aberfeldy; W. Bryson, Perth (conductor); James Moncur, Blairgowrie (now of Nevay); J. S. Allan (son of the Forfar violinist); and J. C. Guthrie, Broughty Ferry, and others took part. It was a great success, resulting in some £70 surplus. Jamie, poor soul, was

ILL IN BED

while all the fun and fiddling were going on elsewhere for his sake. After the concert old Dr Lunan—a great friend and admirer of his—accompanied by Mr Moncur, another notable pupil, called upon him. After a compliment to "Diamond," as Jamie always called

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Mr Moncur, on his success, the Doctor sounded the invalid, and the following conversation ensued:—"Are they giein' you anything to drink, Jamie?" "Oh, mighty little o' that," was the mournful response. "Ay, man, but that'll no dae. I maun see that you get a glass every forenoon and anither every afternoon. That should help to mak' you live langer." "Man, Doctor," exclaimed the patient, tears of gratitude in his eyes, "but ye're the best man that's entered the house sin' I lay doon! And dae ye hear that, wife?" shouted he to his better half. "Dod, man, they're measurin' it oot to me in teaspoonfuls the noo!" He lived four years after that. *Verb. sap. fidicinibus satis*—only, don't forget to consult your doctor first!

Jamie Allan breathed his last at Forfar on the 18th August 1877. In 1894, largely through the efforts of Bailie Lowson, an old friend, a handsome marble tombstone was erected to Strathmore's favourite fiddler, bearing the following inscription:—

In Memory of
JAMES ALLAN,
Musician, Forfar.

Born, 1800. Died, 18th Aug., 1877.

Erected by a few friends and admirers in recognition of his genial sociality and his rare musical genius.

"Hale was his heart and hale was his fiddle;
Lang did his elbow jink and diddle,
Which cheered him through the weary widdle
O' this wild warl'."

**“FACTOR” PANTON,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



Mr. J. Panton

**A MAN OF
AFFAIRS.**

XI.

“FACTOR” PANTON, BLAIRGOWRIE.

This world belongs to the energetic.—EMERSON.

With the word “efficiency” so much in the air at present, it is only natural to associate it with the name of John Panton, the subject of our present sketch, than whom no one ever believed in the thing indicated by the name more firmly or observed it more thoroughly in all his transactions. He was one of the most remarkable business men that the East of Scotland, if not a much wider area, has ever produced, and requires no apology for inclusion in our series. His father, William Panton, was the trusted manager of the Blairgowrie estate for many a long year during the absence of the proprietor in New South Wales, and it was here that his son John was born in the year 1833. It thus happened that he became acquainted with all the details of agricultural work at an early age, and no one ever took to his environment more heartily. He received his educational start at the Parish School, where he was noted for his

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

INTELLIGENCE AND PERSEVERANCE,

fellow-scholars recalling that even when he had been at work at nights, while other boys were at play, he invariably appeared next morning with his lessons well prepared. He completed his education at Glasgow, and afterwards entered the law offices of Duncan & M'Lean, Perth, attending the law classes of Sheriff Barclay at the same time. His ability and industry in the office were soon rewarded with the confidence of his employers. Procurator-Fiscal Duncan esteemed him so highly that he used to take him about with him when any business of importance was to be done—greatly to the benefit of our “Factor,” who thus became acquainted with a large number of people and places which he found exceedingly advantageous in after life. When quite a young man he returned to his native town, and in company with one Dallas, started as solicitor. The partnership was of short duration, however, both gentlemen agreeing to separate, and each opening an office for himself. Young Pantou’s business increased rapidly, and in 1857 he added banking to law, a branch of the Royal Bank being opened at Millbank that year, of which he became the first agent. Things prospered so well that in 1872 it was found necessary to erect and remove to the handsome block of buildings in Allan Street in which the bank, law offices, &c., are at present located. Here the “Factor” became the centre of such

WIDE-REACHING AND MANY-SIDED ACTIVITY

as Blairgowrie had never before witnessed, and can hardly ever witness again. He was entrusted from the start with the factorship of Blairgowrie estate, and to this he added in time that of Park-

“Factor” Panton, Blairgowrie.

hill, Banff, Gleniericht, Coupar Grange, Drumore, and Clayquhat, together with a large number of smaller properties, and thus obtained the cognomen by which he was most frequently known. He acquired large concerns as maltster at the Hill of Blair and at Craigie, Perth, and had a meal mill and a wood mill at Blairgowrie. He had also large businesses as grain merchant in Glasgow, Stirling, and Arbroath, and early in his career had a ship of his own in connection with the grain trade. His auction mart at Blairgowrie was one of his most successful ventures. He became tenant of a number of farms; and by and by he acquired the valuable estates of Dalnagairn, Kirkmichael; Carsie, near Blairgowrie; Inchmartine, Carse of Gowrie; and Buttergask, near Coupar Angus, always taking as many of the farms into his own hands as he could get and working them all with consummate skill and commercial success—what might happen to be the despair of other agriculturists being transformed into profitable concerns from the very start; and those who shook their heads at his novel methods usually finishing up by adopting them themselves.

ONE GREAT SECRET

of his success as an agriculturist was in his generous treatment of the land and skilful management of stock. As has been hinted already, “efficiency” was ever his watchword; no matter the expense, get everything well done, thoroughly done, and done once for all. While the last man to tolerate waste or extravagance, his instructions to his grieves were in effect *carte blanche*—to spare nothing needful. Inchmartine, for instance, which he obtained at a profitable figure with intention to resell, he afterwards determined to retain in his own hands, and proceeded in his

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

wonted style to improve right off into one of the finest properties in the Carse, spending as much as £20 per acre laying it down in grass, top-dressing it, bringing in a supply of water from the hill for each field, &c. Carsie, again, was well wooded when he got it, but the great storm of November '93 co-operated with the Factor in clearing large tracts of it of trees, and there he mapped out a large number of small fruit farms, which he let at from 30s to 40s per acre, erecting commodious dwelling-houses for 5 per cent. on the outlay. The large farm of Gothens, on the same property, he managed himself, and, somewhat in the style of the racing bicyclist, took that veteran and model agriculturist, Mr M'Laren, whose farm adjoins Gothens, as his "pacer"—the standing order to his grieve being to "keep up with Pittendreich!" In addition to all this he rented many thousands of acres of grazings in Perthshire, on which he had so many sheep that one hard winter he was

PAYING NEARLY £100 A DAY

for their feeding. It is said that after hearing a sermon on one occasion on Job and his wealth in bestial, he remarked that "except for the camels" he could "beat Job easy himself!" Special trains were frequently required to bring his cattle to market, and his bill for feeding stuffs—chiefly oilcake from the Newtyle Mill—of which he was a leading Director—would amount to over £10,000 per annum. He came to have so many properties in his hands—houses, shops, hotels, &c.—that the story goes that an old wife who had been out of the town for a number of years, returning to find "F.P." stuck up at most street corners gave vent to her astonishment by exclaiming, "Michty me, half the toon belongs

“Factor” Panton, Blairgowrie.

to Factor Panton noo!” As solicitor he had a large share of the law business not only of the town but the county, and was nothing if not thoroughly in earnest about his clients’ interests. No matter how difficult or complicated the case submitted to him, if there was a way out into the light the shrewd and hard-headed lawyer would find it. Many a tedious and doubtful process at law has he dispensed with by the exercise of that

EXTRAORDINARY KEEN-SIGHTEDNESS

and forcible practical commonsense which were amongst his most outstanding characteristics. His business was always with men—not professionals merely. On one occasion he sent his chief solicitor to Edinburgh to negotiate a very difficult matter with another firm. He came back as he went—not a step farther forward. A question or two showed the factor where the trouble lay. Off went the factor by the first train, and returned next day quite happy. Apart from business proper, he found time to serve on the County Council, the Parish Council, and Blairgowrie Water Committee, of which last he was Chairman. It was largely by his influence that water was introduced from Benachally, eight miles off, in 1870, and it was chiefly by his insistence upon our magic word that the town and district enjoys the present greatly improved system. It is also due to his energy that Kirkmichael has now the benefits of the telegraph and a capital water supply. One of his most cherished schemes—and at which he was busily engaged at the time of his death—was the establishment of the Cottage Hospital for the district, which has been so happily consummated since, chiefly through the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

unwearied efforts of Dr MacLaren. He was also a Director on the Scottish Board of the Royal Insurance Company.

CHARACTERISTICS.

Touching those qualities of mind which seemed to have most to do with Mr Panton's success in life, his unerring instinct for character was surely among the very first. No matter the work he required done—in the law office, in the bank, on the farm, or elsewhere—it was all one: let the new man for the post be brought before him, and with a swift glance of those keen grey eyes of his and a few well-directed questions he had him “sized” up to a nicety. It is doubtful that he ever made a mistake as to character in his life, and it was this gift which enabled him to choose the best men he could get for this and that responsibility, then leave each to attend to it—his quiet eye upon them all the time—while he himself sought other outlets for his energy and enterprise. He always paid his employees well, and that they liked his service is shown by the fact that they rarely quitted it. Here is

AN ILLUSTRATION

of the perfect accuracy with which he could gauge character. A farmer in a neighbouring county had his lease about to expire, but did not wish to renew it because his brother was expected to purchase an estate within a twelvemonth and he the (farmer) would be called upon to manage it; moreover, the rent of his present farm—£270—was far above its value. Off he goes to Blairgowrie and puts his difficulty before the factor, who listened steadily all through. Then taking

“Factor” Panton, Blairgowrie.

out his watch he asked his client how long he had till his next train. “Twenty minutes.” “Very well, then,” was his reply, “you get a snack somewhere before you go, but don’t lose a minute getting home and going straight to Mr F—, and you tell him that you will keep on the farm for another year but don’t feel inclined to give more than £200.” “But, factor, he will never agree to that,” exclaimed the incredulous farmer. “Don’t you waste your time arguing about it,” was the reply; “just go and do as I tell you and let me know how you get on.” The result was precisely as the long-headed Blairgowrie man of business had anticipated; the tenant got the farm on his own terms. The factor knew his man, but his client didn’t; that was all the difference—but such a big one! No one ever saw the factor in a hurry, and no matter how busy he was he had always

A FEW MINUTES TO SPARE

for the casual visitor in search of information or wishing to have a chat over local affairs. As Chairman he was inclined to “rush” things a bit on occasions, but his horror of irrelevancy, “gas,” incapacity, and short-sightedness might be urged as partial excuse, at anyrate. Like Dr Johnson, he always went straight to the point of the argument; there was no formal preparation, no flourishing of the sword—his opponent was transfixed before he knew it. Like the Doctor, too, he was a good hater. Withal, the factor was of a social turn, was a keen curler, and greatly enjoyed an evening with a few kindred spirits, when he would drop the *œs triplex* of business, and become the genial companion. Of his passion for getting the best of a bargain—a feature of his character by no means

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

singular to himself—many stories are told ; but there are clergymen and others interested in charitable work in the district who can testify to his readiness to help forward both by purse and influence such objects as appealed to his practical common-sense. This strong man departed life on the 29th September '98, and the general voice now is, " there were waur men than the factor !" He had his faults, but, " use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping ?"

XII.

“SCHEME” ANDERSON,

BLAIRGOWRIE :

A MAN OF IMAGINATION.

Such tricks hath strong imagination. —M. N. DREAM.

It has been aptly remarked that great men, like great mountains, are judged best at a distance. “Scheme” is a notable instance of this, for it is now a generation since he “shuffled off this mortal coil,” and his wonderful experiences are more admired than even in his own day. His name is curious, and excites the speculative faculty; two theories exist to account for it. The first is that it was the popular expression of the great admiration in which his magnificent gifts of what is known as the “historical imagination” were held by his contemporaries. The second is more commonplace, and is to the effect that our friend was never asked to subscribe to anything but, by a most unfortunate coincidence, he had

A “GRAND SCHEME O’ HIS AIN”

on hand for that identical object, and was thus debarred, much against his will, and entirely from a strict sense of duty, &c., from enjoying the pleasure and privilege, &c., &c. It does not matter which is taken—they were both abomina-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

tions to "Scheme" himself, who didn't always appreciate a good thing. At the height of his fame, he was located in Blairgowrie, engaged in the humble but useful occupation of butcher's assistant, and was in great demand all over the district for his skilful aid, amongst other achievements, in the first steps of what has been termed the conversion of the "prose of pig into the poetry of bacon." On such occasions "Scheme's" tongue would be as active as his knife, and old wives of both sexes would learn things never dreamt of in their philosophy of pig-killing. In Blairgowrie his favourite cronies were "Tolly" Watson, who kept the toll at the head of Jessie Street, and John Cameron, boot-maker. Settled down on the familiar seat near the receipt of custom, he would turn out first-class history quite regardless of cost, and with a celerity that would have left the most expert linotype operator two days behind every afternoon. One day "Tolly" had been making a great fuss about landing a 12-lb. salmon with ordinary trout tackle. "Man, that's naething," exclaimed "Scheme." "A'e day in the summer o' '37 I was herdin' sheep near the Lornty, and saw a fifty-pund salmon comin' up the stream. As luck would hae it, I had nae tackle wi' me, but, nae mair nor anither an' that, an' I had a young hazel up by the roots, an' made a dab at the brute, but lost my feet an' gaed splash into the water. The last I saw o' him, he was scuddin' doon the Lornty wi' the hazel bus' wavin' in the air like a full-rigged ship." "Fine, man, fine," said Cameron, "that must hae been a grand sight!" "Naething to speak o'," replied "Scheme." "It fell out that next year, to the very day—the 19th July, I mind fine—I was herdin' at the identical spot, an' ye'd hardly believe me, billies, but I sees

"Scheme" Anderson, Blairgowrie.

THAT VERY HAZEL BUS'

come sailin' up the stream, aye stickin' in the salmon's back, an' wi' a grand crap o' nuts on it!" He lost the train once in Glasgow. "Nae mair, nor anither, an' that" (his favourite shibboleth) said he; "but I whipped on to the telegraph, an' was in Perth Station, an' had a smoke twa oors afore the train cam' in." He took a trip to London and back by the same expeditious method, and the "neebours never missed him frae the doors," explaining that he hacked off the tops of the obstructive telegraph poles with his knife as he "flew past them." Some one was talking about big "neeps." "Scheme" had been there, too. "It would be in the winter o' '38. I had twa fine ewes lost in the snaw at Easter Tullyneddie for 17 days. Man, when the thaw cam', nae mair nor anither, an' that, but there they were, inside twa grand neeps they had eaten the inside oot o'. But," said he, warming to the subject, "that was naething. I mind fine, in the winter o' '42, losing 37 sheep in the snaw at Glengirnock for hale three weeks an' twa days. Whan the snaw cleared aff, I cam' across them under some laich larick branches, an' they had a' eaten ane anither's 'oo' aff. By an' by some o' the sheep dee'd, an' jaloosin' what was wrang, nae mair nor anither, an' that, but I had their stummicks opened, an' took oot a ba' o' 'oo' frae ilk ane o' them, an' they throve wonderfu' efter that." He made

A RECORD LEAP

once which it is feared has escaped the vigilance of Mr M'Combie Smith. He was running to catch the Dundee boat, but found it just leaving the pier. "Nae mair nor anither, an' that,"

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

said he, "but I sprang on to the deck, an' the captain was that bambazed he cam' back and measured the distance. It was exactly 26 feet 4 inches." A "gamey" had killed 11 foxes one day in Glenshee. "That was puir wark," said "Scheme." "Ae morn in Glen Tilt, Munch"—(his dog)—"an' me gaed oot an' nicked 27 foxes an' a young ane afore breakfast." Some one had caught five roe-deer in Meikleour woods. That was a small affair. "Munch an' me were oot ae morn on Craig Roman, whaur I kent the roe-deer were in hunders. I fixes doon a fine young larick wi' a runnin' noose, gi'es Munch the wurd, an aff she gaes, gets awa' roon', and herds a fine roe-deer richt into the noose. Nae mair nor anither, an' that, an' up springs the tree, an' there's the brute danglin' in the air by the neck. I cuts him doon, fixes the trap again, and had seeventeen bucks and roes afore I gae up." An old wife was extolling the virtues of some hog's lard she had. "I mind o' some grand stuff I ance had," recalled

THIS WONDERFUL MAN.

"I gae some o't to a pit-sawyer to rub on his saw, an' the rats were that mighty fond o't they eated the teeth aff the saw afore mornin'." "Man, that was a pity," remarked "Tolly." "Weel, it didna matter muckle efter a'," added he, "for he juist rubbed on some mair, an' the rats had nibbled oot a new set o' teeth afore he gaed back." "Scheme" had the honour of carrying the flag at the head of the butchers in the trades procession, which was held in celebration of the Prince of Wales' marriage in 1863. He was immensely proud of the job. The emblem on the flag was a bull's head, cleverly copied from the familiar advertisement of Coleman's mus-

“Scheme” Anderson, Blairgowrie.

tard, which was new about that time, and the artist was none other than the now famous painter, David Farquharson, A.R.S.A., who is a native of the district, and was then only a humble house-painter in Blairgowrie. The sign over the “Royal Hotel,” Blairgowrie, it may be mentioned in passing, is still in evidence of his work in this line. At an earlier date—in 1842—“Scheme” was in Perth, and saw the Queen. “She noddit to me,” he was wont to declare; but there was no first-class poet about to do justice to that historic event, although our friend did his best to compensate for that grave overlook. So far as authentic tradition goes “Scheme” never met his match but once, and that was in a man from Arbroath. Our friend was discoursing at large about some grand sport he had had with his gun “ae mornin’ up in Glengirnock,” when the thunderbolt fell. “Man, ye ken naething about sport,” interjected the presumptuous stranger. “I mind aince o’ firin’ at a covey o’ paitricks; oot gaed my shot, killin’ three hunder o’ the brutes; aff gaed my ramrod wi’ the shot twa miles in the cluds, an’ stringin’ nine wild geese by the een; the gun gae sic a putt as ca’d me clean owre, killin’ a fine fat hare in the seat, an’ as I was tryin’ to get up I put my tae in the yird an’ kicked oot a foggie bees’ bike wi’ twenty pints o’ honey. *That* was a shot to blaw about!” “Scheme” looked at the man, sat blinking and thinking for a minute or two, then rose and walked off

WITHOUT UTTERING A WORD.

He did not return to his usual seat for a fortnight thereafter. He came to grief on another occasion, and in another way. The late Rev. Mr

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Rae, Kinloch, sent in his servant to get "Scheme" to come out to kill his pig. The girl asked someone where "Scheme" Anderson stayed. Now, this bold, bad man, being lamentably deficient in the bump of veneration for the true, the beautiful, and the good, did wilfully, feloniously, and with malice aforethought, affect to reprove this trustful country girl for her loose manner of address, telling her she should on no account call him "Scheme" Anderson. "What then?" inquired she. "Why, Mr Scheme Anderson, of course," answered he. Then away skippeth this blithe-hearted maiden to the house indicated, knocketh at the door, and, lo, there appeareth unto her the redoubtable "Scheme" himself. Then saith he unto her, "What d'ye want, lassie?" And she answereth him, "Are you Mr Scheme Anderson?" Then saith he in a loud voice, "Wha sent ye here?" To which she replied with great fear and trembling, "Mr Rae o' Kinloch; an' please, Mr Scheme, you're to come out immediately to kill the pig." And "Mr Scheme" was wroth with a terrible wrath, and banged the door in that astonished wench's face, exclaiming in a voice of thunder, "Ye can gae back to Kinloch an' tell Mr Rae frae me to gae to blazes an' kill his pig himsel'!"

**JOHN BRIDIE,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



Mr. Jn. Bridie.

**MAGISTRATE,
ARTIST,
LITTERATEUR.**

XIII.

JOHN BRIDIE,

BLAIRGOWRIE.

A marvellous witty fellow.—“Much Ado About Nothing.”

Were one called upon to name the outstanding characteristic by which John Bridie was best known while alive and is most aptly recalled now he has gone, it might with safety be put down as geniality. He carried about with him a variety of this commendable quality wherever he went peculiarly his own, and whether in the workshop, on the bowling green or the ice, presiding at the Council Board or some social function, on holiday with a congenial companion, or merely having a talk on passing events at a street corner, it found vent in such “quips and cranks” and “wreathed smiles” as never failed to put even the most dumpish of mortals on better terms with himself and all the world. His manner was to look at things from the brightest point of view. The common habit with people of “worriting” themselves about matters which might never occur had no place in his philosophy. He was fond of telling a story about a gardener in the North who fell into

A DESPONDENT STATE

about the deplorable Government they had, and the rottenness of things in general. “What’s

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

wrang?" asked the cook. "Everything's gane wrang thegether," declared he; "the very State's gaun to ruin." "An' what needs ye fash aboot that?" answered the cook; "aren't ye as weel as ever ye were, wi' the same kind maister, the same guid wages? What needs ye trouble your head aboot the State?" "Ah, Janet, Janet," sighed the disconsolate democrat, "ye ken naething aboot it, but if ye read the 'Aberdeen Chronicle' ye'll see hoo meeserable ye are!" To our friend all the world was a stage, and "all the men and women merely players." The business was to make the performance as acceptable as possible; and when the curtain fell suddenly in the middle of the play, as it did in his case, the audience realised they had seen the last of one who had sensibly contributed to their profitable entertainment. After the play comes the criticism, but the heart of the community is right when it places John Bridie among those whose memory it would not willingly let die, and the present article is a "Stone of Remembrance" upon his cairn. He was born in Dundee in 1829, and served his apprenticeship there as a house painter, working afterwards in some of the best establishments in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and elsewhere, finally coming to Blairgowrie, and starting there for himself in 1855. His exceptional abilities as a tradesman very soon received recognition, and the inside of many a mansion in the district, as well as shop fronts, signs, &c., still testify to his great taste and skill. In the spirit of the true artist, he inspected all the good "jobs" he could manage to get at in the West of Scotland and in England; and rarely went on holiday but had some side show of this sort in his eye. Far above ordinary house painting, however, he had

John Bridie, Blairgowrie.

SUCH DISTINCT GIFTS

as a painter in oil and water colours as, had he chosen to cultivate them, might have given him as good a claim to public recognition as that which another house painter of the district—Mr David Farquharson, A.R.S.A.—has won for himself. As it was, his canvases frequently graced the walls of local exhibitions, while, as a very reliable judge of good work, his critiques of the Royal Scottish Academy exhibitions appeared in the local newspapers for a number of years. In passing it may be noted also that he was local correspondent for the “Dundee Advertiser” for some considerable time. He had a particularly happy knack of turning out on short notice special designs for public functions—one of the most memorable being for the great Russell banquet of 1863, and others the speaking likenesses of Handel, Mendelssohn, and other composers for the Choral Society’s concerts. Whatever he did, whether some fine graining, a shop sign, or an ornate interior, bore his sign-manual of thoroughness; the amount of pay he was to get for his work being the last thing to enter his consideration. In public affairs he always took a great interest; entered the old baronial Town Council in 1867, ultimately becoming Baron Bailie; was a member of the Police Commission, of which he rose to be Chief Magistrate, and, on the 1892 Act coming into force, was the first to receive the title of Provost; served many years on the old Parochial Board, on the Water Commission, &c.; was President of the Horticultural Society; Vice-President and at one time Secretary of Blairgowrie Curling Club; Vice-President of the Bowling Club; Vice-Chairman of the Liberal

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Association; Session Clerk to the U.P. Church,
&c. Touching

HIS LITERARY ACTIVITIES,

while still a youth in Dundee, he joined a Debating Society which used to meet in an artist's house, and on coming to Blair he immediately associated himself with the Mechanics' Institute, which was then the great centre of "light and leading" for the district, and may fairly claim to be so yet, although other agencies have taken up much of the work it inaugurated. There is some pathos in the fact that of the twelve members constituting the first Committee (1853), only that veteran, Bailie Steven, remains, and still takes an active interest in the concerns of this useful institution. Mr William Davie, Dunkeld, was probably one of the original members, although not on the first Committee. They were a band of genuine worthies, those, that used to meet once a week in the old Chapel in George Street to discuss such strenuous matters as "Geology," "Phrenology," "Ethnology," "Human Capability," "Progress of Science and Art," "Physical Geography," "Galvanism," "Gravitation and Inertia," "Influence of Literature," "Motion and Pressure," "Human Frame," &c. Bridie was the life of many a meeting, and although his tastes were literary, he contributed at one time and another papers on such subjects as "Colour," "Fine Art in Architecture and Sculpture," "Encouragement of Fine Art," "Pre-Raphaelitism," besides many others. But, as already indicated, his preference was literature; his favourite branch of it poetry; his favourite poets, Shakespeare, Milton, Hudibras," and Burns. He had a splen-

John Bridie, Blairgowrie.

did memory, and it would have been difficult to find his match for aptness of quotation, more particularly from Shakespeare. When in happy mood his speeches and even his conversation reminded one of the dresses of some fair dames, the texture of which cannot be seen for the embroidery. This faculty, together with his wit, readiness of repartee, and

UNFAILING GOOD HUMOUR,

made him a nimble adversary, but he was the opposite of an aggressive one. He would sacrifice an argument at any time, if not a principle, for the sake of peace; but the temptation to let off some of his fireworks, even among the sober feet of the "City Fathers," and at the risk of personal offence, was irresistible on occasions—only to be followed with profound apologies immediately thereafter. He was an inveterate punster. Wendell Holmes would have lynched him without mercy for his "verbicides." But his witticisms came as naturally as his puns. One of the former was connected with the memorable answer of the French General to the query of Napoleon just before the Franco-Prussian War broke out, whether everything was ready: "Yes, sire, to the last button." Birdie and some friends happened to be touring in France after the war, and on the road to Versailles he picked up a regimental button. "This, gentlemen," said he, showing off his find, "is no doubt the 'last button!'" But the Bailie—the public ignored the Provostship—was in the "full meridian of his glory" at some social gathering—for preference a curling supper after a glorious day on the ice. It was then that his facile

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

gift of verse had full play, and most of his happiest efforts in this line were inspired by special occasions. He finds an honoured place in Edwards' "Modern Scottish Poets," and as a good specimen of his style the following parody is quoted. It was written on the occasion of a bazaar for the Mechanics' Institute. Mr James Luke (now in Calcutta) was manager; the late Mr Struth had an exhibition of machinery; and Mr Hector W. MacCallum (now in Perth) ran an "art(ful) exhibition."

THE GALLANT BAZAAR.

The Charge of the Light (-Fingered) Brigade,
Lord Luc-an Commanding.

"Have a league, have a league,
Advertise onward,
All in the newspapers
Bode the Six Hundred.
Forward the Light Brigade,
Charge for the goods," he said;
"Into the pirley-pig
Get the Six Hundred!"

Forward the Light Brigade—
Was any one dismayed?—
Not though they guessed that the
Sum would be under'd;
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to make 'em buy,
And in the pirley-pig
Put the Six Hundred.

Ladies to the right of them,
Ladies to the left of them,
Ladies in front of them,
Raffled and plundered;
Storming each fop and swell,
Boldly they sought and well,
Into the pass-book and
Into the cash-box to
Put the Six Hundred.

John Bridie, Blairgowrie.

Twinkled their eyes so rare,
Flashed as they looked so fair,
Screwing the sinners there,
Charging so sweetly that
 All the folk wondered!
Plying the lottery-poke,
Right through the crowd they broke,
Cheque-book and cash-book
Yielded their notes like smoke,
 Scattered and sundered:
Then they summed up, but not—
 Not the £600!

Ladies to right of them,
Ladies to left of them,
Ladies behind, who had
 Raffled and plundered;
Struth with mechanic spell,
What-you-May-Call-him's "sell;"
Gorilla, bagatelle,
Came to the common fund,
Having done very well,
Though they were short of it—
 Short of Six Hundred.

How can it all be paid?
Oh, the high charge they made!
 All of us wondered;
Bother the charge they made,
"Count the four C's," he said—
Honour the Light Brigade,
 Nobby Four Hundred!

TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Bailie Bridie devoted ungrudgingly a large amount of his time and ability. In matters of policy he always showed an honest endeavour to hold the balance evenly between contending interests, and if to some people he appeared too anxious at times to please everybody—with the proverbial result—his social spirit was the explanation. One of the last kindly offices he performed was to act as mediator between employers and employed in a local strike a few

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

days before his death. This latter took place very suddenly on the 26th June 1894. The following beautiful and heartfelt tribute of an old and intimate friend appeared a few days afterwards :—

Farewell, old comrade! first to reach the goal
Though starting later. With what wondering eyes
Thou gazest on the new and grand sunrise
That bursts upon the emancipated soul,
For ever widening as the ages roll
To new horizons, brighter, lovelier skies.
Behold the home dreamed of with vague surmise,
With Love Infinite brooding over all!

To all the beauty and wonder immanent,
'Thine was the fresh child-heart that opened free;
Life's deepest shadows ever were to thee
As artists' foils for splendours opulent;
Where shadows deepest gloomed, glowed Light intense,
Self-luminous, too bright for mortal sense.

“DAFT HARRY,”

BLAIRGOWRIE.



**AN OLD
BLAIRGOWRIE
CHARACTER.**

XIV.

“DAFT HARRY,”

BLAIRGOWRIE.

Some things are of that nature as to make
One's fancy merry while his heart doth ache.—BUNYAN.

Praisers of old times seem to have lost a grand chance in neglecting to show that even “daft fowk” are not so good nowadays as they used to be. This is a serious charge, affecting as it does, according to Carlyle, the character of practically the whole community; but, after all, every one is quite ready to admit, if that will do any good, that there are no fools like old fools, and there the matter may be allowed to remain. “Daft Harry” appeared under the old system, and was one of the most interesting “characters” known to the district. His proper name was Henry M‘Intosh, but he never got anything but “Harry”—always pronounced “Harey.” His father, William M‘Intosh, was a shoemaker with a bit croft at the clachan of Tamannat, which stood on the braes above Kinloch, about two miles west from Blairgowrie, at the beginning of last century, but has long since disappeared. Misfortunes overtook the shoemaker and his wife, Martha, and the couple resolved to come into Rattray—fate ordaining that on the very day of removal (Martinmas, 1799) Harry

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

should be born on arrival at their new home. He grew up to be a strong, healthy boy, but of weak intellect, and all attempts to teach him failed. He was sent to school, but when he began to knock down his fellow-scholars with the thick wooden board on which it had been found necessary to paint the alphabet for his use, he got his leaving certificate prompt, and the school knew him no more. Both his parents died before he reached manhood, and Harry was thenceforth, to the end of his life, dependent for the comforts of home upon the affectionate and never-failing ministrations of his sister, Mary—a quiet, patient, faithful creature—and Harry, in turn, was devoted to his sister. Possessing a strong physique, our friend found frequent employment with “Whorlie” Butter, whose turning-shop was behind where Mr Grant, chemist, has his premises now.

THERE HE “PECH’D” AWAY

at the big fly-wheel, which he turned with a crank, and which was used to operate a drill for boring bobbins. He sometimes assisted “Andra” Robertson, also, in the same place at the cross-cut saw, and was completely under his control. His confidence in his friend was so absolute that he would even entrust him with his purse at times when afraid he might lose it. Leading characteristics of Harry were honesty, truthfulness, and reliability; the absence of anything mean or underhand about him, his dislike of the mischievous and vicious, and his instinctive avoidance, even in his begging rounds, of people not generally regarded as respectable. Speaking of begging; that was a great business with our friend, who had set days on which he made his rounds, generally provided with two “scran bags”

“Daft Harry,” Blairgowrie.

—one for bread and the other for bones and table scraps. These commodious receptacles failing, there were always his capacious pockets to fall back upon for the surplus, and hence the origin of one of the boys’ pet names—“Greasy Pouches!” And those boys—they were

THE PLAGUE OF HIS LIFE.

Mary generally planned to get him off on his “foraging expeditions” when the school was in; but there never failed to be one or two of the little wretches about to yell names at him from street corners and other vantage points, and he was always certain to give chase, and the chances were that he was hindered till the “schule scaled,” and a couple of hundred or so of his tormentors were dancing all around him, shouting “Wheel! Wheel!” “Greasy Pouches!” “Scoonge!” “Burgess! Burgess!” till he was in a perfect frenzy. With his old “tile” hat on the back of his head—that is, if the boys had not knocked it off!—his red scarf flying in the wind, and the two bags in his hands walloping about him right and left, he would dash hither and thither in the vain endeavour to capture some of the young demons, only to add to their sport and increase the hubbub, which sort of thing would go on till some kind-hearted neighbours or passers-by interfered, or old “Posty,” the solitary town officer, appeared on the scene. Touching poor Harry’s nicknames—“Wheel!” of course, referred to his occupation with “Whorlie;” but “Burgess!”—probably the most detested sound that ever entered his ears—concerned a half-witted and deformed girl called Annie Burgess, of whom Harry was alleged to be enamoured. That gentleman, however, resented the soft impeachment with all

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

the vigour of which he was capable—and that was something to remember, as an occasional boy learned by tearful experience. But Harry was only one against many, and he generally got the worst of it in the long run. Saturday was a head day for the boys; a day of trial and trouble for their victim. First, he had to undergo the operation of “shaving,” in preparation for the Sabbath, and when it is mentioned that the politest term used for the barber was “Skin-em-Alive,” and that there was a couplet in currency in which something is said about

The Barber o' Blair,
Wha tak's the skin an' leaves the hair!

the operation has an ominous look about it. But that was not all; for Harry would perhaps be seated on the chair, nicely arrayed in the barber's beautiful white-cum-sanguinary-splotch sheet, and with a first-class lather all over his week-old stubbled face, when the boys, with their flattened noses against the window or their heads in at the door, would decide that the exact psychological moment had arrived, and there was a concerted shout of “Wheel! Wheel!—Burgess! Burgess!” and Harry was up and after them, sheet, lather, and all. Like most of his kind, he was partial to bands, shows, and exhibitions of all kinds, but his special *penchant* was “birrals”—the “sombre trappings and the suits of woe” having a peculiar fascination for him. He was never tired talking about the grand turnout there would be by and by on his own account, and how much he would enjoy the procession on its way up the Boatbrae to Rattray Kirkyard. One day David Soutar, a fellow-worker with “Whorlie,” bothered him by insinuating that he would have nothing better than

“Daft Harry,” Blairgowrie.

the very shabby “hearse” that belonged to the parish—a one-horse-spring-cart sort of thing that was disposed of afterwards to a man in Newtyle and used for selling coals—but Harry was emphatic that he would “rather get oot an’ travel!” He was not peculiar in having rather hazy ideas as to what was to follow that event. He certainly had

A WHOLESOME DISLIKE OF THE NETHER REGIONS,

but, unfortunately, did not seem quite satisfied with the other place, for, as he explained, “the ministers sent a’ the puir fowk there,” adding, “an’ ye ken I never liket puir fowk!” which was quite true, as any strange beggars that happened to come in his way were not long in discovering. Among his other notions was to start farming on a large scale; he half-killed a man whom he discovered one day pulling up a number of stakes on some land he had appropriated for his own use. Then he was to open a chemist’s shop, which was to be fitted up in most gorgeous style, with any amount of glittering bottles and coloured jars about, and cures for all the ills that flesh is heir to—but “nae pills, mind ye”—for he didn’t think much of them as articles of diet. Another brilliant idea of his was a machine for “grindin’ auld fowk young,” and it was an experience to hear his thrilling description of the wonderful wheels within wheels, and the great big hopper into which the halt, the maimed, the blind, and other wrecks of humanity had only to be dropped—then one good, vigorous turn of the crank and the trick was accomplished. But Harry’s rejuvenating machine was of no avail when his own time came. In his later years he fell into consumption, and was confined to bed for

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

a considerable period before the end. When he felt it approaching, his old friend Andra came to see him, and, with the memory of old days strong upon him, Harry held out his wasted hands to him, exclaiming, "'Tak' me in your arms, Andra!" He passed away on 6th November 1858, and through the kindness of Mr David Brown, innkeeper, Daft Harry's funeral was all that he had desired and anticipated.

“POST REID,”

BLAIRGOWRIE.



“OLD POSTY,”

OLD TOWN OFFICER.

XV.

"POST REID,"

BLAIRGOWRIE.



One man in his day plays many parts.—SHAKESPEARE.

"Posty" was one of the old "characters" of Blair who flourished at the time when individuality was as much the rule as it is now the exception. He came by his familiar cognomen "Post" or "Posty" as carrier of the mails at one time between Kirkmichael and Blairgowrie, but is best remembered as the fiery yet kind-hearted old Highlander who managed to preserve "the peace of Blair" with wonderful tact, when that would do, and prompt, energetic action when it wouldn't, and thorough conscientiousness in either case, for

MANY A LONG YEAR.

His proper name was Alexander Reid, and his native place Strathardle. For the first half of his life he was engaged at farm work, and he is next heard of as tenant of Aldchlappie Inn, near Kirkmichael, in which connection he ran the mail gig to Blair. Then a very unusual experience fell to his lot. His wife and family made up their minds to emigrate to America, but "Post" did not take to the notion, and they went off without him. About this time the berth of town officer of Blairgowrie being vacant, he accepted the situation, and filled it with credit and character till his death—the town

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

getting first-class service for their money, his contemporaries the benefit of his personal acquaintance, and a succeeding generation the entertaining reminiscences associated with his name—together a good, profitable investment. Old "Post" was a favourite with every one, notwithstanding his stern duties at times, and no one enjoyed a joke better than the gorgeously arrayed Town Officer—blue surtout, scarlet collar, glittering metal buttons, "tile" hat, and all. It was even hinted that he had been a pranky youth in his own time, and the sly twinkle in his little eyes did not belie the insinuation. One of the earliest stories in this connection deals with his farm life, when he had for companion a priggish young fellow, who was

NEVER DONE BRAGGING

of his influence over the fair sex. Sandy—he wasn't "Post" just then—discovering that he was in the habit of meeting the farmer's daughter at night when the family had retired to rest, resolved to provide the orthodox interruption to the course of true love which is so pleasing to everybody, except the parties most concerned. The room in which the happy lovers met was reached by a steep, narrow stair, with a wooden door at the foot. One night the heartless wretch, in stocking soles, followed up the unsuspecting youth, placed a large heavy roller, used for "straiking" the bushel measure, on the second step from the top, crept down the stair again, "sneaked" the door, and retired to await developments. Some time about midnight—

Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!

It sounded as if the roof had suddenly tumbled in, and the alarmed household rushed to the spot to

"Post Reid," Blairgowrie.

find poor Romeo groaning at the bottom of the stair, with the roller below him, and the door wrenched from its hinges above him. Sandy Reid, being a sound sleeper, never heard a "mudge" of it all, and was quite astonished when he got the whole story in the morning. When he had Aldchlappie two sportsmen who were staying in the inn sat down to dinner one day, and, with magnificent appetites, first tackled the joint, and proceeded to deal with a brace of grouse, which they had ordered Posty to have done in his best style. When they lifted the lid of the dish out flew the birds, and, after a whirr round the room, disappeared through the open window, mine host apparently having forgot to cook them. A sharp tug at the bell for explanations brought in Posty, prompt, smiling, and anticipatory of all unpleasantness, with a cover containing another brace done in the most appetising style that could be desired.

SMUGGLING,

it is hardly necessary to state, was a great institution in country districts then, and, although it was never positively certain that the Aldchlappie innkeeper had a still of his own, the general opinion might be expressed in the words of another worthy—"Maybe ay, an' maybe oooh ay!" Anyhow, as local carrier, many a keg of the forbidden liquor he managed to smuggle down the glen, till the gangers pounced upon three at the bottom of his cart one journey, and from that date on he was the special object of the officers' regards, never managing to get down the road without having to submit to a search. Posty wasn't the man to stand this sort of thing for nothing, and prepared his revenge. Filling two kegs with a certain vile liquid which used to be in

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

great demand for dyeing purposes, but taking care to have a rich odour of the right sort about the bung-holes, he purposely got down to Blair later than usual, and was, of course, accosted by the gaugers, who soon found the two kegs at the bottom of the cart, which the carrier declared emphatically did not contain whisky. What, had they no sense? Could they not smell it for themselves? Out came one of the bungs, into the keg was dipped the metal suction-pipe, and one of the gaugers—*horresco referens*—took a draw,

DISCOVERING TOO LATE

that Posty was quite right. He was nearly choked with the stuff, and as he spluttered all over the place, Posty, honest man, suggested that he should "try the ither ane" to see whether it was any better. But he didn't. As town officer the old fellow had always his work cut out for him by the boys, who were a great torment. At that time there was a number of old-fashioned houses and shops at the Cross, amongst which was a shop occupied by another old Highlander, called Duncan Robertson, watchmaker—known as "Watchie" for short—whose window, where he was to be seen working away day after day, was always a great centre of attraction for the young folks. Watchie didn't appreciate their attentions, however, and would rush out occasionally with a whip and lash about him with dire effect. Posty resented "Tuncan's" taking the law into his own hands, so when the boys put a wheelbarrow across Watchie's door one night, roused him to madness by their antics at the window, and he made a sortie in the usual way, the result may be guessed. When the doctor had patched him up, Posty got in his thrust as well as the boys by remarking,

"Post Reid," Blairgowrie.

"An' you, Tuncan, you'll took to be your ain offisher, but noo you're beat, whup an' a'!" which was poor consolation to Tuncan, what ffer. The greatest day in all the year for the Town Officer was the Fair o' Blair, which was in its prime then—the whole Wellmeadow, Gasbrae, Boatbrae, Allan Street, and well along High Street being a

SCENE OF STIR AND ANIMATION

beyond present opportunities for description. Special constables were always sworn in for the occasion, and the Town Officer was head of the "force" for one day of the year at any rate. One busy Fair Day, while endeavouring to separate two quarrelsome fellows, he got a savage kick in the abdomen which set him howling dreadfully in several languages—Gaelic predominating. A little girl ran home and told her mother that "a wild man" had "kickit Posty," and he was "greetin' in Gaelic!" Seeing to the good behaviour of the town was, however, only one of the old Highlander's functions. When people became quite good and his occupation was gone in the moral line, he would start scraping the streets if it were dirty weather—never scrupling to put the horse-droppings in his pockets if the barrow wasn't handy—and never forgetting to leave the "post heaps," as they were called, at the most likely places for stepping into on dark nights. The result was much profanity, and the ruination of many a Christian character. Another function which he shone in was as doorkeeper at the Town Hall, which was the only place in those days where public meetings could be held. A

MEMORABLE ENTERTAINMENT

took place in it on one occasion. This was a concert given by a Polish exile called

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Jacobovitch, together with his wife. It was a great success both from the performing and financial points of view; so much so that the couple arranged to give another concert. Tickets sold well for it also, but a "sooch" went round that Madam Jacobovitch—"which she is a' that!" Posty declared—was not likely to appear, for reasons alleged. Curiosity was raised, and produced a good turnout. Then Monsieur the exile ascended the platform, and, after a profound bow, thus addressed his audience—"Ladies and shentlemaus,—My vife she not come here dis night. She got de golig (colic), and she got de w'i-ky; de more ov de w'isky de more ov de golig, and de more ov de golig de more ov de w'isky!" He entertained the audience himself, however, for an hour in capital style. Old Posty departed life on the 15th August 1849, the last of his race.

**STEWART JACK,
MEIKELOUR.**



Stewart Jack

**SLATER AND
VILLAGE
PHILOSOPHER.**

XVI.

STEWART JACK, MEIKLEOUR.

I.

A fellow of infinite jest.—SHAKESPEARE.

It is a commonplace experience with students of rural life in bygone times which becomes positively monotonous, to find that it hardly matters how small the community one is dealing with, if only the period be far enough back—say, anything from thirty to fifty years as a minimum—there is sure to be one or more outstanding figures in it whose sayings and doings are to become the favourite theme of succeeding generations. Whether the same process is going on in our own day is extremely doubtful; but that is a question we have no business with here. Stewart Jack was a good illustration of this, as the sequel should show. He first saw light in Alyth in 1787. His father and grandfather belonged to the same district, his grandfather being one of the few retainers of Airlie in Alyth who turned out with him in the '45.

HE WAS AT CULLODEN,

and went through the whole campaign, his ardour causing him to lock his wife in the house in order to get off with the laird. A well-dinted shield and much-hacked sword showed the sort of business he had been at while away. The mementoes were sold to a packman by Stewart's

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

mother—to the never-ending regret of her son. He learned the trade of slater, and came to Meikleour, some four miles on the other side of Blairgowrie when a young man, and at his most thriving period undertook large contracts as far north as Blair Atholl and south to Edinburgh. Touching "contracts," the word invariably recalls Stewart's reply to the smart youths who met him one morning. "Dear me, Stewart," was their surprised greeting, "we thought you would be in Perth. This is the day the big job is to be settled." "What's that?" asked Stewart, with his usual snivel. "Oh, the slating of the railway between Perth and Forfar, you know." "Man, I've been that busy I forgot a' about it," replied Stewart, offering his snuff mull without a wince. "You see, I've just settled the contract for the Loch o' Clunie." Stewart's name is most frequently associated with such witticisms, but he is

WORTHY OF REMEMBRANCE

on much more substantial grounds. He was an omnivorous reader, and could read comfortably, he declared, going at five miles an hour if the road was familiar; and a great sight it was, too, to see the tall, gaunt figure "shauchlin'" along in his "lum" hat—without which he was seldom seen—a book in one hand and a bundle of tools in the other. Fortunately for Stewart's taste, and for that of the cluster of hard-headed theologians, politicians, logicians, and whatever else which the village boasted, there was a capital little library in it, fostered by the Baroness Keith and Nairne—grandmother of our present Foreign Secretary. Amongst its contents were "Encyclopædia Britannica," Hume's works, Rollin's "Ancient History," Chambers's "Papers for the People," and possibly the

Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

works of Voltaire, Volney, and Tom Paine, as Stewart showed a familiar knowledge of these last, and quoted them frequently, as well as from pre-French-Revolution literature generally.

HIS MEMORY.

As for his memory, it was simply perfect—complete *catalogue raisonné* of everything he had seen, heard, or read; every item duly ear-marked and pigeon-holed, ready for production at a moment's notice. He fell in with a band of gipsies about Crieff one day as he was tramping home from Edinburgh, and nothing would do but that he should stop and give them a lecture on their own ancient history. He was awakened in the dead of night on another occasion by a pushful little beggar of a schoolboy—who was in a pickle of trouble to find out the date of Prince Charlie's death. The sleeping slater heard the tapping on his window. "Are you waukin', Stewart?" asked our scholar. "Ay; is that you, laddie?" said Stewart, recognising the voice of a favourite of his. "Ay. Whan did Prince Charlie dee?" "Seeventeen aughty-aucht," was the answer, as he turned over again.

A mistaken statement by someone led him off into a description of the destruction of the Roman fleet off Syracuse by Archimedes with his burning lenses. "Ay, laddie," said he, one night, pointing to the constellation Orion, "there it hings, just as Job saw it from the plains of Syria and the Magi watched it from the towers of Babylon!" A question about the moon brought out a discourse on the solar system. "Tell Stewart, Peter," said a fond grandfather to his boy, "aboot that wonderfu' burning mountain in America." "Oh, ay,"

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said Stewart, at once, "that'll be Popocatepetl, nae doot, the extinct volcano in Mexico, seventeen thoosand seeven hunder and aughty-four feet high, and forty miles sooth-east from the city of Mexico. It's aye smokin' yet, laddie, but there hasna been an eruption since 1568!"

THE MAN FOLKS

held meetings frequently, particularly in winter, and what these worthies didn't discuss—and settle—wasn't worth a hoast. The wonder is there is still so much to talk about. Each of them had his own individuality:—Old James Tamson, mason, was regarded as the best logician; Charlie Cochrane was a great wit; John Scott, a remarkably intelligent and well-informed man, &c.; but Stewart was a match for them all—in turn or altogether. There was always a "grand nicht" when Millar, the author of "The Tay," used to visit the village periodically to square up for the "Strathmore Journal," which used to circulate in the district—5d a copy, and no copy with less than five or six subscribers. The slater had pronounced opinions upon everything he read. He was never tired of ridiculing "finality Johnny" (Lord John Russell) and his sliding scale of taxation. He did not care for Cromwell, Hume having carried him away; he admired John Hampden; used to compare David to Rob Roy, and Dr Johnson to an ill-conditioned tyke. He had a mortal antipathy to Henry VIII., being too fond of his own wife, Nelly Walker—despite appearances at times—to abide that much-married monarch. And, touching domesticities, mention must be made of his one great weakness—turning up the little finger. Dearly as he loved Nelly, he gave her many a sore heart. "Is

Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

it true, Stewart," asked an idle fellow, "that you have drunk as much whisky as might float a 50-gun man-o'-war?" "Weel, I'm no sayin' but I might gie it a gey shog." One day an elder of Lethendy Kirk and Stewart dropped into "Danger Inn," at the east end of Old Rattray, near the bridge. The elder called for a gill, drew down his big blue bonnet and proceeded to say grace—Stewart meantime

EMPTIED THE STOUP.

"It's weel ca'd 'Danger Inn,'" was the remark he made to his companion's astonished look; "an' that should show you that watchin' is far mair necessar' than prayin'!"

He used to declare that he had a ladder so crooked he had to go round it three times to reach the top. He got a present of some firewood so green that it was, like Orr's Almanack—intended for next year. He was on the roof of his own house one day, busy "putting out the lum," and a passer-by sympathised with him. His reply was in the words of the preacher—"Better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." A favourite saying of his—referring to the French Revolution and other great movements originating with the people—was that "hunger was the best politician." "What tune's that you're playin'?" asked he of a village flute player. "Waterloo." "I was thinkin' that," remarked Stewart; "for it was a gey ravelled mess!" And so on, *ad. lib.*

The genuine respect and affection Stewart enjoyed from every one are well shown in a single anecdote. One Saturday night the only grocer in the village ran out of bread, and

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Stewart had to go without. The news spread—"Stewart has nae bread," and first one, then another, and another, called with bannocks and cakes and bread and cheese, &c., till he might have started a provision store on his own account.

Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

II.

XVII.—MORE ABOUT THE VILLAGE PHILOSOPHER.

Stewart got his first ideas of history, it may be mentioned, at his father's knee out of an old volume of Buchanan's History of Scotland, and was, as already stated, an omnivorous yet discriminative reader. He did not have a very high opinion of Cromwell, having been greatly influenced in his estimate of the Protector by Hume. One of his judgments was—"Oliver was clean wrang when he declared that the Lord delivered the Scotch army at Dunbar into his hands. Man, it was the Presbyterian ministers that delivered them!" He was frequently heard to say of the gipsies, whom he was wont to lecture about their own ancient history in a manner more amazing than instructive—"Naebody can sing withoot a certain amount o' literary culture, but thae gipsies come gey near the thing by pure imitation." He was a volunteer in his early days, and while at Lunan Bay, a suspicious Dutch lugger having been captured by a British gunboat, the crew were brought ashore and Stewart was deputed with others to escort the prisoners to Inverness. He used to declare that these sailors were the most desperate-looking characters he ever saw, and that "ony o' them might have stood for the original of Dirk Hatteraick." A remarkable old soldier—Sir Bannister Tarleton—took Meikleour House for a number of seasons. He had been a captain of horse during the American War of Independence,

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and being of a bluff, hearty, good-natured disposition, and very fond of the villagers, he soon discovered

A BROTHER SPIRIT

in Stewart, who became a frequent visitor at the house, where over many a steaming bowl the old warrior

Fought all his battles o'er again,
And thrice he routed all his foes,
And thrice he slew the slain.

The Meikleour slater, if he was not "fellow with the best king" was the "best king of good fellows" on such occasions. Old Tarleton used to maintain that after the war he was "played out like a d——d fighting cock!" He was a devoted angler, and the Tay close by yielded frequent tribute to his skill. His wife, however, who was equally kind-hearted and interested in the villagers, prevailed upon him to lay aside his takes on the Wednesdays for their behoof; but when he had landed a particularly fine fish on that day and wished to gratify some of his friends (and do a little self-glorification) he would compound with his humble and complaisant beneficiaries for a gift of flesh instead of fish—always to the advantage of the recipients. Before leaving Meikleour for good and all he rode round the Cross on his war horse—which he always brought with him—three times, bidding good-bye to everybody, and as a final and inclusive valediction sat upright in the saddle, and thus addressed them:—"My friends, I bid you all good-bye once more. I've been all round the world in my time, but swear I have never seen any dem'd place it has cost me so much trouble to leave as Meikleour!" Here follow a few more

Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

of Stewart's witticisms, and if the "dram" is a too conspicuous figure in most of them, it must never be forgot as palliation of Stewart's weakness that the "fierce light that beats upon a throne" applies equally well to the village slater, who was an outstanding individuality in his own little circle. One day he and David Scott, mason, had been west of Clunie purchasing a cow each, but

COULD NOT PASS MILLER'S INN

without entering—tying the cows to the paling before doing so. Some wag made off with the animals, and caused the worthies some trouble when they were ready to resume the journey. They had to start off without their bestial, and when they reached the Limekilns *les miserables* sat down to condole with each other. William Duff, Clunie, who is understood to have had something to do with the disappearance of the kye, was passing, and heard Scott say, "Man, Stewart, we'll get an awfu' hearin' frae Mr Balfour for this!" (Mr Balfour was their minister.) "I'm no carin' a dockin' for Mr Balfour," said Stewart; "but I'll tell ye what, David," added he, taking a great pinch of snuff, "it's high time we started a *new religion*, and the first article o' doctrine will be that ilk ane get as muckle whisky as he likes to pay for." On being reproved by a clergyman on one occasion for his excesses, Stewart's reply, which had a pointed reference to the clergyman himself, was—"Weel, Mr —, I've never yet seen atween the twa brods o' the Bible ony prohibition o' *whisky*, but there are plenty o' passages makin' it gey hot for wine-bibbers!" "As for wine itsel'," said he on another occasion, "I wudna gi'e it guts-room!" One day he was found drinking from the Loch of

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Clunie. "What are you about, Stewart?" asked some one. "Oh, juist makin' grog o' last nicht's drink!" At a

CERTAIN SOCIAL GATHERING

the intervals between the toasts were far too long for his taste. "Mr Chairman," said he, rising, "I've a toast to propose in which I houp ye'll a' jine heartily." "Hear, hear," cried the company, "go on wi' your toast, Stewart." "Weel, gentlemen, fill your glasses, an' here's to a' people *that on earth do dwell!*" Coming into Blair one day he met Matthew Harris, a hunchback. "Hillo! Mattha," exclaimed he, "did ye come strecht frae Blair?" "Ay," said Mattha. "Weel, ye've gotten awfu' crookit on the road." He once fell from the roof of a house into a heap of manure. "Man, Stewart, that was a geyin' fa' ye had," said a sympathetic old wife as she scraped him. "Fa', wumman," exclaimed the wrathful and malodorous slater, "the fa' wad hae been naething but for the confounded stinkin' stappin'." He had a big score "caulked" up against him at Miller's Inn, Clunie, and the landlord kept nagging him for payment. Stewart's exchequer couldn't stand the strain of present demands, let alone past, and saying nothing about the future; but, credit or no credit, he put a handful of old keys, &c., in his pocket and stept along to Clunie. "Weel, Mr Miller," said he, "I've juist come alang to see aboot that account o' mine. It's been owre lang on the road." "'Deed I, Stewart," chimed in the expectant creditor. "Weel," said Stewart, jingling the keys and other "rubbitch" in his pocket, "see a gill o' your best, an' rin up hoo muckle I'm awn ye." The gill was set down, and the slim slater had gulped it down and was through with business before the landlord had

Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

adjusted his "specs" for the formidable summation. "Ye can

PUT THAT DOON WI' THE REST,"

remarked he, as he passed out into the night. He had a job up Glenshee way once, and got up very early on a Sunday morning to put on the last few slates before starting for home. All the caution in the world, however, would not prevent an old wife hearing him. "Ye auld, muckle-nosed sinner!" cried she, "to daur to brak' the Sawbbath in that shamfu' way!" "Michty me, wumman," exclaimed the slater, stopping short, "ye dinna tell me ye've Sawbbath sae far north as this!" While repairing the roof on Tay Farm house, near Spittalfield, Duff, the farmer, chaffed Stewart about the number of people he had "done" for a dram. "That was because they didna ken ye, Stewart," said he; "I'm gey shure ye'd never tak' me in." "Maybe no," was all Stewart said, and went on with his work. Shortly afterwards he came down for a load of slates, got half-way up the ladder when he was seized suddenly with an awful fit of trembling, scattering the slates in every direction, and nearly toppling over the ladder with his contortions. Arrived on the ground, he sank down in a state of collapse, his groans really heart-breaking. The farmer, in a great state, ran in for the whisky, but poor Stewart's teeth chattered in his head to such an extent it was with great difficulty that a glass was got over; another was tried, with better results, and, muttering something about "feeling better noo," the slater gathered up his slates and got up the ladder all right. "Man, Duff," exclaimed he from the roof, "ye're

DONE WI' THE REST!"

If the following story is true, he was neatly done

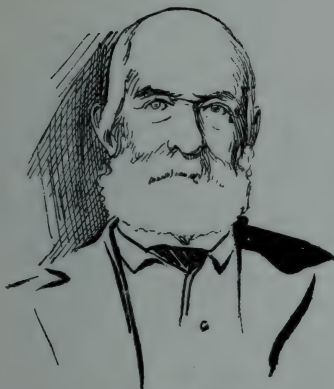
Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

himself on one occasion. It is told of another villager also, however. Stewart, as formerly mentioned, was a great snuffer, but used to get his supplies from Balmain's, Perth, having nothing but contempt for the snuff sold in the village. One day the carrier, having forgot to bring a promised half-pound, supplied himself in the village, and met Stewart on the road to meet him, fairly "finissin'" for his sneeshin'. Opening the "poke" he took a mighty pinch, and, with a great inhalation and immense gusto, exclaimed loud enough for the people inside the shop to hear—"Man, that's a pear o' anither tree! nane o' your rubbitchy Meikleour stuff!"

Pallida mors knocked at Stewart's humble portal on the 5th February 1863, in his 76th year; and thus passed away a man of such mental endowments as might have graced many a high position in life.

“UNCLE TOM,”

MEIKLEOUR.



Mr. T. Mc Lachlan.

**QUARRYWORKER,
GENERAL MERCHANT,
ANGLER, AND
DISTINGUISHED FREEMASON.**

XVIII.

“UNCLE TOM,”

MEIKLEOUR.

Age, too, shines out, and, garrulous, recounts the feats of youth.—THOMSON.

There are two enjoyable adjuncts to a holiday at Meikleour which the sensible visitor never overlooks—a sight of the Beech Hedge and a “crack with ‘Uncle Tom.’” The one is as remarkable for its grandeur as the other for its desirable simplicity. Tom lays no claim to any outstanding personal achievement; all his greatness in the public world appertains to his baptism, for which he was not responsible, and the distinction of being the Freemason of the longest standing in Scotland, or perhaps the world—an honour which only comes with age.

In the parish of Little Dunkeld, Perthshire, away back in 1818, was born a male descendant of the real Clan MacLachlan, who was to be christened Thomas. The baptism, however, was not such an easy matter. The minister on the appointed day was to journey to Edinburgh, and young Tom was to be carried to a toll-house, on the way to “kep” the minister. Here it was arranged that the ceremony should be performed, but by some cause or other the baptismal party was late for the rev. gentleman, and after catching him at another part of the road, had to ask the loan of a bowl at a neighbouring house, and get the child christened at

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

the roadside. The subject of that ceremony is "Uncle Tom," now an aged grandfather of 84 years, frail and rheumatic certainly, but still able to take a daily walk, and as hearty as ever.

Tom was the youngest member of the family, and his father, besides working in Birnam Quarry, owned a bit of land and a few cows. In the days of Tom's education all the scholars during winter had to carry to school each morning either a piece of firewood or a peat. In Little Dunkeld, the seat of our old friend's learning, the schoolmaster in those days was an excellent educationalist, but, Tom remarks, he was terribly hard. After undergoing what was then thought a good training, our old friend, at the age of 16 entered Birnam Quarry, where his father was employed. Here he worked for the long period of 21 years under the guidance of a kind master, Mr Harris. When Tom left in 1853 to start the business of grocer and general merchant in Meikleour—which he still carries on—it was with tears in his eyes that Mr Harris exclaimed—"Weel, Tom, you've served me faithfully an' honourably a' that time, an' I'm sweer to lose ye. But it seems the best o' friends maun pairt, an' so maun you an' me."

Here mention might be made of Mr Cuthbert, who also worked in the slate quarries, and has been a life-long friend of Mr M'Lachlan. This old gentleman is also a Freemason, as every man in Dunkeld seemed to be in those days. Mr Cuthbert was once taken to a metal quarry in the district belonging to his master to do some blasting. The blast, however, went off prematurely, and Mr Cuthbert, then a comparatively young man, had his leg and arm broken and was deprived of the sight of both eyes. He is the father of Mr Cuthbert, aerated water manufacturer, Dunkeld, who carries all

“Uncle Tom,” Meikleour.

the news between the two old cronies now that they are unable to visit each other.

Though nominally carrying on the business of general merchant at Meikleour, Mr M'Lachlan was early called upon by the “folks at the Big Hoose” to work in the garden. The “gentry” also took a notion to him for the fishing, for he was an expert in the art, and he did duty on the Tay for Lord Lansdowne and his guests as long as he was able. Many pleasant experiences, humourous (and true!) fishy stories, he can recall, and nothing delights Tom better than to tell of the goodness of his employers. The ladies of the Lansdowne family seem to have been true devotees of the sport. Every morning at ten o'clock Tom had to put in his appearance at the mansion to see if Lady Emily (now the wife of Colonel Digby) desired to go shooting or fishing. For these regular services as well as for his usefulness and ever helpful advice, Tom is still remembered by Lord Lansdowne, Lady Emily, and her husband. Colonel Digby especially is a regular visitor when in the vicinity, and never shakes with an empty hand.

Tom was over 70 years of age before rheumatism troubled him. He could stand the cold as well as any of the fishers, and he tells with delight a story of a competition amongst the members of a party to decide who would longest refrain from admitting the cold. Needless to say, Tom won. Even yet he declares that if he had the use of his right leg he “would be a young chap.”

Mr M'Lachlan's long connection with Freemasonry must be referred to. For 68 years he has been a true and interested member of the secret craft, and probably this is a record. His father and eldest brother had already taken the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

vows of St John's Operative Lodge, Dunkeld, when, along with an elder brother, Tom was induced to join the craft. He then wanted some months of being the required age of 18 years, but this was overlooked when the two brothers joined at the same time. This brother, who was forester at Murthly at the time, died under rather sad circumstances a few years after. It was on the occasion of the visit of the late Queen Victoria to Scone Palace, and a huge bonfire was being lit on the top of a neighbouring hill in honour of the event. After the lighting ceremony had been performed several of the men, including young M'Lachlan, started in a race, but as the smoke was blowing across their path, they did not notice that they were running towards the edge of a cliff, and M'Lachlan was over before he could be warned.

This is the only member of the family who did not reach a ripe old age, for Mr M'Lachlan comes of a long-lived race. His father was working in Birnam Quarry at 82 years of age, when he was suddenly laid down with rheumatics; his paternal grandfather was 103 before he died; while his mother's father lived for 85 years. His eldest sister died unmarried at 88; another reached 93; while a third, who married the innkeeper at Meikleour, was, as Mr M'Lachlan puts it, "just 74." Stewart Jack, elsewhere accounted for in these pages, was a friend of Tom's, and according to the latter's opinion "quite a young chap" when he died at 76. Mr M'Lachlan's partner in life still enjoys excellent health at 77, and her father was a patriarch of 90 when he died in Canada.

XIX.

WILLIAM DUFF,

CLUNIE :

**ARTISTIC WORKER IN WOOD,
HUMORIST.**



One of the most charming beauty spots in all Perthshire is the Loch of Clunie, with its romantic and historic castle, about five miles from Blairgowrie; and those who can recall visiting the place so far back, say, as 1881, or earlier, can hardly fail to associate the event with a genial, courteous, and intelligent old gentleman, who was usually in attendance to give the freedom of the boats, supply any information wanted, and otherwise contribute to the enjoyment of the party in every way within his power. That was William Duff, forester and land steward on the Airlie estate, of which Clunie at that time formed part, but was afterwards purchased by Mr W. H. Cox of Snaigow. If the visitors had time, and their tastes lay that way, he would show them his "armoury," as he called it, comprising an interesting collection of Scottish weapons and other relics from Culloden, remains from the stone age and Roman occupation found in the district, &c. Much more strik-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

ing to the casual visitor than these, however, was his curious assortment of articles which in his leisure he had fashioned out of abnormal tree roots, stumps, and excrescences—chairs, garden seats, tables, desks, &c., all of fantastic design and beautiful workmanship; monstrous-looking animals, all heads and legs and horns; hideous and grotesque faces and heads, and things beyond all name or classification whatsoever—something between a nightmare and a binominal theorem.

SEVERAL VIOLINS

might be seen lying about, too, and perhaps a 'cello, all of his own make; and if bunches of horehound, "feather-foullie," camomile, &c., together with sundry jars, bottles, and retorts were among the oddments that caught the eye it would excite no surprise, for he was, with the rest, a skilled herbalist, and the "true apothecary" for all the countryside. This Stormont favourite was born probably in 1802 at Clunie, his father, Alexander Duff, being land steward on the Airlie estate. William went to Cortachy as a youth, and assisted his father in various ways, ultimately succeeding him in his post—father and son covering over a hundred years of faithful service between them. He came to reside at Clunie in 1837, and died there in 1882. That is the "history" of the man in brief, from the ordinary point of view; there is really not another date worth noting. So heedless of the mad world's doings outside was Willie Duff of Clunie, that he never entered a railway carriage in his life; it is doubtful if he ever saw one, except on a certain occasion shortly after the line was opened to Blairgowrie in 1855, when he happened to be in the town in connection with

William Duff, Clunie.

the Clunie rents. All over the Stormont, however, his name is held in kindly remembrance, and of no one can this be said whose life has been in vain. Dealing with his skill as a wood-worker, his first love seems to have been violin making, in which line he did capital work. It is said that when a young man of 17 or 18 years of age he took his first violin to Jamie Sandy, of Alyth, and asked him to varnish it for him. Jamie, seated as usual at his strange bed-bench, took the instrument in his hand, examined it critically, and handed it back with the discouraging remark, "I'll dae naething o' the kind." The young fiddle-maker's countenance fell. "For," added he immediately, "the lad that oan mak' a fiddle like that should varnish it for himsel'. Sit doon there, an' I'll show ye hoo to dae it!" And it was thus that Duff got his first lesson in fiddle varnishing. He became

A GOOD PLAYER ALSO.

An old man used to declare that his rendering of "Delvineside" was not unworthy of comparison with Niel Gow's, which he had heard. Many a "grand nicht" the fiddlers for miles round about had in Duff's house. So far as concerns the work of his hands, however, it is his wonderful creations out of tree roots, &c., by which he is best remembered. His skill in this department was well known all over the district, and the neighbouring gentry were liberal patrons. The Dowager-Countess of Airlie purchased many specimens of his work, including a couple of very elaborate chairs made from sections of a poplar tree, one of which, it is said, was sent to the late Queen. At his death nearly all his effects were scattered, but much of it is still to be found in the Stormont. A memorable in-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

stance of his sportive fancy he fashioned out of a tree root and stuck above his shed. It does not lose anything in the descriptions given of it; but from all accounts it must have been a "most delicate monster," with a pipe in its mouth and a pair of glaring eyes—kindly supplied by the artist. Duff was very proud of his achievement, dubbed it "Veechan Vhor," and maintained that it was a speaking likeness of a neighbour called Anderson. That highly-honoured but innocent individual came along one day, and after examining it remarked that whoever it was meant for must be "an ill-lookin' deevil." Stewart Jack, the first time he saw it, stood stock-still in mute admiration. "What dae ye ca' that, Willie?" asked he at length. "Oh, that's Veechan Vhor, Stewart," replied Duff. "Weel," said he, taking a snuff, "I canna see hoo it would be wrang to fa' doon an' worship it, for it's like naething in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth."

ON ANOTHER OCCASION

Stewart happened to come into Duff's room, where a poor old man, twisted out of all shape by rheumatism, was sitting among the curios as like another himself as could be. Stewart went straight up to him, and, giving him a huge slap on the back, turned to Duff with the query—"Man, Willie, whaur did ye get this grand rit!" (root). Stewart was born 15 years before, and died 19 years before Duff, but the two are associated in many a story. The earliest of these is when Duff and his brother Alexander were boys. Their mother had been washing at the side of the loch, and the two youngsters having got hold of a big tub, started out on a voyage of discovery. Stewart

William Duff, Clunie.

was roofing a house near by, and shouted to their father to come quick as the lads had "circumnavigated the loch and landed on the island!" The last, again, deals with Stewart's coming to Duff one day with an invincible apple he had taken off one of the trees on this same island. "What kind o' apple dae ye ca' that, Willie?" asked he. "Oh, something between a codlin' and a pippin, I think." "Weel," said the slater, as he tried to get into it, first with his teeth, then with his trowel, without any success, "I'm thinkin' that gin that had been in the garden o' Eden it would have dung Eve an' the devil an' a' to gar Adam eat it!" A curious half-witted couple were Gilbert Clark and his wife, who used to go about the district begging. "Gibbie" leading his wife with a "stræ raip" about her waist. They had a very good friend in Duff, who, however, frequently got his own amusement out of them by setting the poor beggars on the top of a knowe near the old castle, and starting them to sing—and such singing. Gibbie had a rare scent for funerals, never missing one, the food and drink being generally plentiful on such occasions. At one of these he had managed to imbibe so much of the latter that he fell asleep in a ditch by the roadside, awakening just as the sombre cortege was passing along with its burden. Gibbie sat up, and, under the impression that they were returning from the burying-ground, cried out—"Weel, lads, hae ye delivered the corp a' richt?" One of Duff's amusing stories was

ABOUT ANOTHER FUNERAL

in Lintrathen. Deceased was the wife of a gamekeeper, and the coffin had to be carried, old style, all the way to Glenisla. Just as the

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party were about to start, the chief mourner, ordering them to "haud a wee," ran into the house and speedily reappeared with his big gamebag slung across his shoulder and his gun comfortably tucked under his arm. "Ye see," explained he, in reply to looks of inquiry, "I'll maybe get a baff at a hare as we gae owre the hill!" Our Clunie wag once provoked a Frenchman to a duel with swords, and managed to use his weapon so well that he disarmed his opponent, and chased him in thorough bloodthirsty style all over the place, Mounseer shouting for quarter with all his might. Duff didn't kill him. Speaking of the Frenchman recalls the French-horn player, Johnnie Small, whom our friend persuaded into the belief that he was a great poet, advised him to get his powerful rhymes printed, and to see the minister about taking a number of copies. Johnnie went to the minister, and submitted some of his productions for a strictly candid favourable opinion. That gentleman, being, one regrets to note, quite evidently no judge of poetry, condemned said productions body and soul; there was a sudden rise of temperature, and the poet returned the compliment, a volcanic eruption ensuing. One of Duff's own favourite quotations was from a Dundee precursor to M'Gonagall as follows:—

When I am laid in death's dark bed,
An' my grey locks wi' earth are happit,
An' nature's plaid is owre me laid,
An' a' the corners nicely clatted,
You'll mind upon auld Johnnie then,
His tartan plaid an' hairy sporran,
His axe, his pipes, his philabeg,
His sneeshin' mull an' whisky hor(a)n!

Tinkers came about the district frequently, and found comfortable quarters at the Lime Kilns, not far from the loch. Duff was a

William Duff, Clunie.

splendid mimic, and delighted to sit for an hour or two listening to the loud-voiced squabblers, returning home to go over the whole performance again, the voice and gesture of each of the speakers being reproduced to perfection. A decent old Highlander called Tam Macfarlane was another favourite subject of his; he was so good at him that he deceived Tam's own son on one occasion. But the most amusing instance of this wit was in connection with two men in the district who got the credit of ill-treating their wives. Their cottages were not far from each other near the Loch of the Lowes. One night Duff and a companion had been at some social gathering in Dunkeld, and were returning in the small hours of the morning in jolly humour. When they reached the first of the cottages—occupied, let us say, by M'Dougall, the other by Thomson—Duff, being ready for sport at any time, went to the window, and began tapping vigorously, calling out all the while in the

FAMILIAR WHINING VOICE

of Tam Macfarlane—"Ochone, ochone! Get up at the instant, Mr M'Dougall!" "Is that you, Tam?" asked the individual addressed. "Indeet an' it iss that same," replied Tam, "an' it will be that damt rascal Jamie Tamson's wife that will be murdered before you get along to help her if you be not quick, Mr M'Dougall!" "Michty me, dae ye tell me sae? The wratch! Rin along, Tam, and dae what ye can till I come!" Duff and his chum ran along all right, and roused Thomson in similar manner—to haste, for the love of goodness, to rescue M'Dougall's poor wife. The conspirators got behind a dyke,

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and were witnesses of the meeting of the two worthies, and the man who could not enjoy Duff's narrative of that historic event was hopeless. As already hinted, his skill as an herbalist was in frequent demand, and was always at the service of his neighbours without fee or reward, save in the pleasure of alleviating some of the ills that flesh is heir to. It was the same with all those kindly offices he was glad to show strangers visiting the loch and castle: "tips," of course, he was offered frequently, but they were invariably refused. A fine, lovable soul was Willie Duff of Clunie, and it will be many a year ere his memory withers.

**IAN MACLAREN,
A STRATHMORE BOY.**



SCOTTISH IDYLLIST.

XX.

IAN MACLAREN, A STRATHMORE BOY.

It is my joy that Strathmore is in a sense my home. I spent a great deal of my boyhood and youth there, and the accent of Strathmore is dear to my heart.—Dr John Watson.

“A Strathmore boy”—that is all that is claimed in the gifted author of “Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush,” “Days of Auld Langsyne,” “Kate Carnegie,” and the many other grateful products of his pen. It would have been more to our mind, of course, to have been able to call him a native of the district out and out; but, seeing it is well established that he was born elsewhere, that probably would have been rather difficult of proof. There is some consolation for this disappointment in the fact, which we have on his own solemn assurance, that the place of his birth was “a matter on which he had no choice,” and it is reasonable to infer that had it been otherwise he would have chosen Strathmore. It is further consolation to know, much as the old woman during a great storm on board ship who exclaimed, “Thank the Lord, if we go to the bottom, we all go together!” that if Strathmore cannot claim the honour of his birth no other district in Scotland can, for he first saw light in England. The latter fact makes no difference, of course, to the man who is determined upon being a Scot, as Ian Mac-

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laren certainly is, and we have always the proverb of the man born in the stable to strengthen our case. The only question, therefore, is—With what particular locality does he appear to have been most intimately associated? To the folk of Strathmore there is but one answer, and they scout the idea that his

SHORT STAY IN LOGIEALMOND

accounts for everything that Ian Maclaren has done. Why, he was only some two years there altogether, and twenty-five years of age when he went, and if the “child is father of the man” there is a long boyhood to be accounted for before he wandered up Glen Urtach or waited the train at Kildrummie Junction as minister of Drumtochty. Then we have his own statements about Strathmore and its inhabitants, and we know for surety that his mother and some half-dozen uncles, several aunts and cousins, were natives of the district; that it was on his uncles’ farms of the Grange, near Coupar Angus; Gormack, Wester Kinloch, and Easter Caputh—not to mention others near Blairgowrie—that he luxuriated during his schoolboy and student days, taking a lusty interest in the “hairst” work, scampering over the country astride his favourite pony, roaming the Muir of Gormack and the Muir of Cochrage, and otherwise thoroughly enjoying himself. To begin with, Dr Watson was born at Manningtree, Essex, on the 3d November 1850, his father, the late John Watson, being then connected with the Excise, in which service he afterwards rose to a very high position. Shortly after his birth his parents removed to London, then to Perth and Stirling. At Perth he attended the Academy, and at Stirling the

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Grammar School, afterwards proceeding to Edinburgh University, where he finished his curriculum by taking his degree. Next came divinity at the new F.C. College, among the Professors at which was the late Dr Davidson, Professor of Hebrew, and at the start of his career missionary at Craigmill, near Blairgowrie. His course finished here, the young student went to Tübingen, Germany, where he was a pupil of the famous Beck. Returning home, he was licensed by the Free Church of Scotland in 1874, and found his first place as assistant to the Rev. Dr Wilson, Barclay Free Church, Edinburgh. The year following he was ordained minister of Logiealmond Free Church; in 1877 he accepted a call from Free St Matthew's, Glasgow (succeeding Dr Samuel Miller, a relative of the Geekie family, Rosemount, Blairgowrie); and finally, in 1880, became minister of

SEFTON PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LIVERPOOL.

He held the position of Moderator of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1900, and has been honoured with the degree of D.D. from both St Andrews and Yale Universities—the latter as Lyman Beecher Lecturer there in 1896. Sefton Park Church, of which the Doctor was the first minister, and where he has laboured for the past twenty-two years, is a large, handsome building, seated for 1000, the congregation being one of the wealthiest and most influential in Liverpool. He is a great worker; two offshoot churches and a mission are the partial results of his never-ceasing activity. He preached in the "First Free" a number of times while on holiday during the late Dr Baxter's time. But there is a sweet little kirk and manse and a

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QUAINT OLD KIRKYARD

at Kinloch, just two short miles from Blairgowrie, Dunkeldward, which the great city minister knows well—has known ever since, as a boy on a visit to his uncles at Gormack, a mile or so at the back of the hill, he used to sit with them in the pews of Sundays, or galloped down the road to get his pony shod at the smithy close by of week-days. The kirkyard is in his heart of hearts, and round it our own interest circles, for here, within a few feet of each other, rest the mortal remains of his father and mother, his grandfather and grandmother, six uncles, and two aunts. Two monuments tell us something of the departed. This one records that “John Maclaren, farmer, Drumlochy, died on 19th June 1851, aged 84; and Margaret Carmichael, his wife, died on 6th December 1848, aged 69.” These were the parents of Dr Watson’s mother. Then follows:—“And their daughter Isabella, beloved wife of John Watson, died at Stirling, 26th October, 1871, aged 57; also, John Watson, Receiver of General Taxes for Scotland, died at Edinburgh, 1st January 1879.” These were his parents. “Sacred to the memory of Archibald Maclaren, farmer, Grange of Aberbothrie, died 4th November 1865, aged 60; also, Peter Maclaren, died at Grange of Aberbothrie, September 1876; also Jane Maclaren, died at Blairgowrie, 5th March 1884; sacred to the memory of John Maclaren, farmer, Easter Caputh, died 15th July 1870, aged 68; and William Maclaren, died at Gormack, 18th June 1883”—uncles and aunts. On the other stone we find:—“James Maclaren, Wester Kinloch, died 23d May 1876, aged 48; and Margaret Maclaren, his wife, died 14th

Ian Maclaren, a Strathmore Boy.

March 1864; and Duncan Maclaren, late of Gormack, died at Blairgowrie 1884"—two other uncles and an aunt. It was at the Grange of Aberbothrie (tenanted at present by Mr James Fleming) that, as already indicated, the Doctor spent many of his holidays, and readers of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" familiar with the district have more than an impression that the dangerous ford on the Tochtly, so dramatically described in the chapter "Crossing the Flood," is indebted much more to the author's recollections of Bardmony Ford on the Isla, which was no distance from his uncle's farm, than to anything on the Almond. It was at Bardmony Ford that he

NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE

on two occasions. "I know that ford well," said he at the opening of the Bardmony Bridge Bazaar on the 14th August 1899, "and I am bound to say that it is one of the wickedest fords that ever was. When I crossed it yesterday it was smooth and quiet, and a boy could drive across it; but when a spate comes down no ford is more dangerous, and twice I nearly lost my life in it. . . . I see myself crossing, the water coming up higher and higher, the conveyance beginning to shake from side to side, and my worthy uncle crying to me to jump to the offside to keep clear of the conveyance in case it went over!" That graphic little picture reads like a transcript of the crossing of the Tochtly by Dr MacLure and the grand London doctor, with Hillocks directing operations on the opposite bank. "Dr Davidson," again is recognised by every one who knew the late Dr Barty, ex-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland,

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as a very faithful portrait. Dr Watson himself, on the same occasion, referred to Dr Barty in these terms:—"I want to pay a tribute to one who seemed to me to be the very ideal of a country minister—your neighbour, the late respected Dr Barty, of Bendochy. He was the father of the parish. His very appearance carried authority and kindness with it. I see him standing in the pulpit on the Sacrament day, moving about the parish, speaking with the farmers, and wherever he went always a Christian gentleman, bringing to bear the principles of our religion on daily life in a kindly and wise fashion. Long may Scotland have ministers in parishes like Dr Barty!" That was Dr Davidson or Dr Barty, as the reader chooses; it is all the same. Touching Dr Watson's parents, old residents have it that it was while John Watson was acting as supervisor over the distillery at Pitcarmick, Strathardle, that he became acquainted with Elizabeth Maclaren, who kept house for her brother, Peter, at Cochrage, in the vicinity. No wonder therefore that the Doctor, while enjoying

A MUCH-NEEDED HOLIDAY

in 1901 at Kinloch as the guest of the Rev. T. Milne and his esteemed lady, showed particular interest in the little kirkyard and its brief records. James Maclaren, beadle, will always retain pleasant memories of the visit, seeing he was made the recipient on the Doctor's return home of several of his works, inscribed to his "brother clansman, with best wishes from Ian Maclaren." No other character of his is so much beloved, either in Britain or abroad, as Dr MacLure, that heroic old man, who was "an honour to his profession." When the

Ian Maclaren, a Strathmore Boy.

“Bonnie Brier Bush” appeared Blairgowrie people recognised at once the late Dr Lunan in all essential particulars of character, habit, speech, devotion, manner—everything, in fact, except mere physical features and apparel. That there might be no doubt about the matter, however, the author was written to by the present writer, and the following is an extract from Dr Watson’s letter:—“With regard to your inquiry, I say without hesitation that among three or four devoted country doctors who, as it were, sat for the portrait of Dr MacLure, Dr Lunan was one. I knew something of his hard and priceless work; something also of the honesty and reality of his character.” “Jamie Soutar,” also, “cynic-in-ordinary to Drumtochty,” had his original in a wag of the same name in Blairgowrie. It is observed, too, that nearly all the place-names are from the district—Pittendreich, Burnhead, Gormack, Hillocks, Milton, Nether-ton, Netheraird, &c. Even “MacLure” seems a corruption of “Meikleour,” and “Drumtochty” has no plausible connection with the place of the same name in Kincardineshire, but suggests rather “Drumlochy,” where the author’s mother was born. An old student of Perth Academy, which the Doctor attended for a time as a boy, declared he could identify almost every one of the “Young Barbarians” as fellow-scholars. But Pittendreich is associated with a memorable event in the Doctor’s career. Just about two miles south from Kinloch is the United Free Church of Lethendy, the senior minister of which (the Rev. A. Gordon) and Dr Watson are old friends. (In passing, the present writer may be pardoned for mentioning that it was through him, from information supplied by Mr Gordon, that the identity

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of Ian Maclaren was first made public.) Well, it was here that on a certain Sunday in 1874 Dr Watson, then a young man of 24,

PREACHED HIS FIRST SERMON.

It is a coincidence that the "Rev. Mr Carmichael," in "His Mother's Sermon," goes through the same experience, is exactly of the same age, and bears the same Christian name! Pittendreich (Mr W. Maclaren) well remembers that red-letter day himself, and how he and his father, the late John Maclaren (a great friend of Dr Watson's grandfather, Drumlochy, another John Maclaren) together with the young preacher, walked over the hill to Pittendreich, about half a mile away, to get dinner; and how, further, said young man seemed in thoughtful mood, and our esteemed friend asked him how he felt now. "I don't know how I am feeling, Mr Maclaren," was his reply, "but I am just considering whether I am to be a successful preacher or not." "No fear of that," replied Pittendreich; "you are a grand scholar, and have had a fine education every way." "That's all very well, Mr Maclaren," said he, "but there's much more than that wanted, and I am making up my mind that if I am not to be an acceptable preacher of the Word I shall give up the ministry yet." The world has not lost its acceptable preacher through any such decision, however, but his gracious message has gone out into all the ends of the earth, bringing comfort and solace to countless human hearts, and deepening the faith of us all in the spiritual brotherhood of the great human race.

Dr Watson opened the new St Andrew's U.F. Church, Blairgowrie, on the 21st June 1902. It was a great day.

**ISAAC PETERKIN,
ALYTH.**



Isaac Peterkin

**ORATOR,
SOCIAL REFORMER.**

XXI.

ISAAC PETERKIN,

ALYTH.

That old man eloquent.—MILTON.

It is just eleven years ago since the Alyth orator passed away from the scene of his long life's activities, but things move quickly nowadays and, so far as his memory is concerned, it might be a generation ago. Old Isaac enjoyed a full measure of honour, appreciation, and prosperity in his own day, and Time is given to compensations: that seems all. He was born in Dundee sometime about 1810, but the exact date is uncertain. His father was a maker of "rin-shune" in the Overgate, and appears to have been what nowadays would be termed an "Agnostic," as well as an extremist in matters political. It is not strange, therefore, that young Isaac joined the great popular movement which resulted in the Reform Bill of 1832 and the "People's Charter" of 1838, which latter comprehended six items—(1) Manhood suffrage; (2) equal electoral districts; (3) vote by ballot; (4) annual Parliaments; (5) abolition of property qualification; and (6) payment of members of Parliament.

OUR YOUNG POLITICIAN

soon came to be looked up to as an eloquent leader in the movement; was present at the great

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Chartist meeting in Dundee when Sheriffs L'Amy and Henderson had to read the Riot Act; was amongst those who made a march upon Forfar and got worsted at Powrie Brae; was at the meeting in connection with which Mr George Kinloch, grandfather of the present M.P. for East Perthshire, had to flee the country; and two years before he came to Alyth was Chartist delegate from Arbroath at the Scottish Convention at Glasgow, where he moved the adoption of the "Charter," and that it be sent to the House of Commons. One of his most interesting experiences whilst in Dundee was becoming acquainted with the poet Robert Nicoll, who was a member of the same Debating Society. Nicoll, it may be recalled, had been induced in 1834 to go to Dundee and start a circulating library there, and carried it on for some 16 months before leaving for England. Isaac had cherished recollections of hearing Nicoll recite some of his own productions, more particularly that stirring poem the "Bursting of the Chain." He used to lament quite seriously he had not cultivated the Muses himself under such favourable auspices; but, as an old friend of his remarked, "poetry was foreign to the head and heart of the Alyth orator, and had neither place nor power in his life or in his work." He rarely—hardly ever—quoted from the poets or any other standard writers. Outside politics everything else was to him a "leafless desert of the mind," in which he had no delight. Alyth first saw the perfervid Chartist in 1844, when he came out to manage the newly-started Co-Operative Boot and Shoe Society, known as the "Shoe Sosh" for short. It didn't thrive, and before a year was out the shareholders were glad to hand over the whole concern to the

Isaac Peterkin, Alyth.

man in charge on the basis of 2s 6d per £1—greatly to the profit of that individual. Isaac remained in the same shop—in Commercial Street—till 1848, when he removed to the premises in Market Square, near the site of the bridge of

EVER BLESSED MEMORY,

and with which his name will always be associated. But that is another story. There he remained till his death, which took place on the 15th April 1891. Dealing with municipal affairs, it may be noted here that he first entered the Police Commission in 1876, was returned again in 1879, was unsuccessful in 1882 and 1883, but got in, for the last time, in 1890, and, by a sort of fortuitous concurrence of events, was appointed Chief Magistrate right off, and held that position till his death. During the long period of over forty years, it may be said, he was the recognised mouthpiece of the community in every forward movement, and with voice and pen wrought manfully for the people's "lasting good;" but it cannot be disputed that his political opinions underwent important changes, cooling down from the red-hot Chartism of his youth, through Radicalism and Liberalism, to a somewhat frigid Liberal Unionism. There were not wanting those who declared that his political development and his business prosperity were coincident with and interdependent upon each other; but, let that be as it may, Liberal Unionist he was at the close, and, for the rest, liked nothing worse than to be reminded that he had been a Chartist at the beginning. For Gladstone he always entertained great admiration, although he broke away from him on the Home Rule question. When the G.O.M. spoke at Coupar Angus on a tour the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Alyth reformer was there, and gave a sample of his oratory, and it was amusing to observe the interest with which the

VETERAN STATESMAN FOLLOWED

the little man's harangue. There was considerable resemblance between the two politicians—in stature (Peterkin the smaller of the two, however), voice, and flow of language. It was in connection with this occasion that an old woman in the crowd was asked whether she had heard Gladstone, and replied with great content, “Na, but I saw his chaps gaein’.” In Alyth district, it need hardly be stated, the eloquent little man was in perpetual evidence, and a power to be reckoned with by both parties. To the Tories, more particularly in his earlier days, he was *anathema maranatha*, and all their powers of ridicule were turned upon him, but without effect. He was generally the central figure at Liberal gatherings, and always one of the most interesting—to no one more so, let it be hinted, than to the orator himself, for he dearly loved the sound of his own voice. One of his most memorable appearances was at Dunkeld in 1868, when C. S. Parker opposed Sir William Stirling Maxwell. He was once at a great Tory gathering in the City Hall, Perth, and rose in the body of the hall to speak. Cries of “Platform!” however, soon found him there, and going for the respectabilities about him—including Sir William himself—in most approved skittle-alley fashion. At another meeting of Sir William's, in the Free Church, Alyth, he moved an amendment to the vote of confidence in the old member with

SUCH MAGNIFICENT EFFECT

that Keir rose up and shook hands with him, ex-

Isaac Peterkin, Alyth.

claiming—"Mr Peterkin, I wish to God I could speak like you!" No two men's styles could have been in greater contrast: Sir William's quiet, deliberate, and scholarly; Peterkin's impassioned, impetuous, and certainly not remarkable for culture or scholarship. The Alyth orator was a self-educated man, but that never could account for the really curious obtuseness he always displayed to his own shortcomings. There is a thoroughly authentic case of his proposing at a social function the health of a certain lady, who was then a grandmother, as one who in her youth had been "the greatest belly (belle) in the place." The inextinguishable laughter which followed would have put any ordinary mortal on his guard; but Isaac was a superior being, and proceeded to air his French again with more painful precision than ever. Another amusing incident in his career, although not arising from the same cause, is connected with the common saying in Alyth "Pay Lily." A certain Lily Jack sued the shoemaker for payment of a sum of money which she alleged was due her, but which he disputed. The case was tried before Bailie Hill, who first heard Lily's story, then Isaac's, the latter exerting all his eloquence and forensic skill to convince the worthy "Bench" of the righteousness of his cause. The Bailie sat beaming through it all, and at the conclusion thus delivered himself—"That's a very good speech of yours, sir, a very able speech indeed, sir; but ye

MAUN JUIST PEY LILY!"

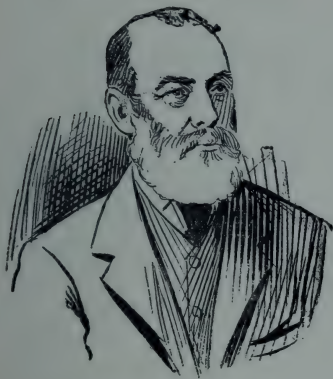
Isaac never married, and his "domestic" arrangements were of the most primitive sort. He accumulated wealth, but lived very meanly, and

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

was always "close." In appearance he was under medium height, with a remarkably high forehead and keen, active eyes—bearing a strong likeness to John Morley, in fact. His usual dress included a peaked cap, shooting coat, and brown leather apron. On Sundays he was always seen in the regulation "tile," and black was his only wear. His workshop was generally in "admired disorder," and his dress in keeping with his surroundings, but he never forgot his dignity wherever he was, and would address the small boy who had come for his "grannie's bauchles" in the same high strain as that adopted for an audience of a thousand. There is a good story told of Sir James Ramsay of Bamff and the Marquis of Breadalbane (a Director of the Caledonian Railway Company) calling upon him at his shop in connection with a proposed extension of Alyth Railway Station. He was busy with his paste-horn, and in the course of his harangue gave it such a "skite" with his tattered sleeve as sent it right into the immaculate shirt-front of the Marquis. The extension was granted!

The end of the old reformer was pathetic. He caught cold attending a reunion of Alyth natives in Dundee. For several months thereafter he gradually grew worse, but still held on to business. On the very day of his death he was behind the counter in a "carried" condition, busy with imaginary "pars" and letters which were never written, and every now and then asking whether they had been sent off. He was coaxed to bed, and an hour later "liffe's poor play was o'er."

**“PROVOST” JACK,
NEWTYLE.**



Provost Jack

A MAN O' PAIRTS.

XXII.

“PROVOST” JACK, NEWTYLE.

And still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.—GOLDSMITH.

It may not be necessary to assume that the Jack family had “a boat o’ their ain” at the Flood, like the Macphersons, but if one is to get at the true inwardness of their genealogical tree, it is a *sine qua non* to start at least with Ian MacIan, Lord of the Isles, a lateral descendant of whom, born in 1660, came to Braemar in 1705, and to Blairgowrie in 1707, when the name was changed to the familiar “Jack.” His son Thomas, by a second marriage, was the father of Stewart Jack, and a younger son, John, grandfather of our esteemed friend in Newtyle. It almost seems as if there was something in a name, after all, as the Irishman, anxious for a first-class tenor voice, thought when he wished he had been christened Sims Reeves. Anyhow, the sons of MacIan appear able to hold their own with the rest of the world, and the doings of many of them are among the “things that matter.” The “Provost”—who, it may be explained, inherits his courtesy title from an old charter of Charles II. in respect of old “Newtyld”—was born at Dunkeld in 1832, where his father was a slater. His parents came to reside in Newtyle in 1834, and used to declare that theirs

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

was the first "reekin' lum" in the new village. Our friend has vivid recollections of

THE EARLY DAYS

of the railway, with its three steep inclines, stationary engine at the top of each, horse haulage with thick hempen ropes used on levels between, and later on the Carmichael-built locomotives to supersede the horses. At the top of Balbeuchly incline was a very sharp turn, and it happened frequently that the engine was unable to bring the three light carriages comprising the train round the curve, but there were always accommodating passengers ready to jump out and give a shove! Between the years 1862-9 a series of diversions reduced the gradients to their present levels, and increased the distance from $10\frac{1}{2}$ to 17 miles. The late Sir George Kinloch, father of the present M.P. for East Perthshire, made "siccar," however, that though the Company "might take him round by John o' Groats" to Dundee, the old fare (1s) should not be exceeded. Our potential "Provost" learned the joiner trade at "Thrums;" returned on the completion of his apprenticeship and the simultaneous death of his father, to Newtyle, to become the head of the house, wrought eight years as journeyman, then went to Dundee as architect's assistant to the late Mr Christopher Kerr, and finally

RETURNED TO NEWTYLE

once more on being appointed Inspector of Poor for the parish in 1864, starting as joiner on his own account at the same time, and retiring two years ago from the latter. And now for some catalogue work, for which one would almost require a Stolzenberg

“Provost” Jack, Newtyle.

patent indexing apparatus. As a lover of instrumental music, our friend flirted with all the members of the flute family in turn, then settled down seriously to the bass ophicleide, indulging in occasional recreative wrestlings with the tenor horn and other brazen relatives. Becoming acquainted with sol-fa, he taught gratuitous classes, juvenile and adult, for many years, and was appointed F.C. precentor in 1856, retiring after 43 years' service. As might be expected, he has had many amusing experiences in this connection. He confesses to having “stuck” more than once; but, as he put it, “I ‘stuck’ when I felt I was wrong, but some precentors don’t know when to stick. There’s an art even in ‘sticking!’” One day he came away without his “specs.” That to an ordinary precentor would have proved a “floorer,” but the precentor in the present instance was no ordinary one, so, reaching up to the pulpit, he asked the minister to give a loan of his. The “specs” were duly handed down, and the Psalm sung. Then they were returned to the minister for the reading;

HANDED DOWN AGAIN

for the next singing; back to the pulpit for the sermon, and so on throughout the service. “Let brotherly love continue!” But for coolness and nerve the following would be difficult to beat—in some respects it is quite unique:—A stranger was in the pulpit one day, and something put our friend off his key. He fairly “stuck;” tried again, with no better luck; and a third trial showed no improvement. “Well,” said he, “I saw it was of no use trying any longer with the wrong key bumming in my head, so I determined to turn up another tune in a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

different key." He was busy hunting up the tune when that rash young cleric had the temerity to rise in the pulpit and say, "Let us pray!" This was more than flesh and blood could stand. "No, no," exclaimed our friend, looking up at the minister, "haud on a wee—I'll get it in the noo!" The minister didn't pray any at that time, but dropped into the well of the pulpit like a harlequin down a trap door. It is comforting to learn that a suitable tune was captured at last, and Psalm and tune were sung

WITH GREAT "GO."

The "Provost" was 23 years among the volunteers, starting as private, and retiring in 1882 as Captain. He holds the long service medal. The post of band sergeant, which he filled for many years, is noticed in passing. As a well-known authority in matters apiarian, he delivered a series of lectures throughout Berwickshire and the Borders as far back as 1882. He confesses to dabbling in rhyme also, and more than one sly "skit" on current events is traceable to his pen. As a leading member of the Literary Society, a number of years ago he wrote a domestic drama which was played on two occasions with great success; instructed the players; with the assistance of a painter provided the requisite scenery—the "drop" displaying a representation of old Bannatyne Home—and acted throughout as stage manager. He is Inspector of Poor and Collector of Rates for the parish of Newtyle, and the oldest Inspector by office in Forfarshire; Inspector and Collector for the parish of Eassie and Nevay; Clerk to the School Board; Secretary and Treasurer to New-

“Provost” Jack, Newtyle.

tyle Public Library, having held office since its institution in 1856; Secretary to the Angus and Mearns Association of Inspectors of Poor; and an elder in the U.F. Church. In his capacity of Inspector of Poor he has had some interesting experiences. On one occasion he was over-reached when the old Parochial Board, against his advice, instructed admission of liability to another parish for a lunatic pauper on the alleged grounds of birth settlement. Eight years afterwards, during which period the parish maintained the lunatic in the Asylum, it was discovered that this man had been born in Ireland, the real man coming to the front in a fresh claim from another parish. Our friend determined to get quit of the spurious pauper, and started for Ireland. After a hard hunt lasting nearly a fortnight he settled the birth-place and early history of the man, returned home, got the necessary papers prepared for the lunatic's removal, and, setting out one afternoon with the “daftie” in charge, had the satisfaction of landing him at a Union Workhouse fifty miles inland from Belfast early next morning. The Board did not grudge his holiday. Our friend's

INFINITE VARIETY

was cleverly hit off in a “par.” which appeared in the “Dundee Advertiser” in 1897, when he retired from the precentorship and was the recipient of several handsome gifts from the congregation. It is reproduced here:—

The visitor to Newtyle will find every trade represented in the village. For instance, if you want a house, you will apply to the house-agent, Mr Jack, a gentleman well known not only in Newtyle but in Dundee and throughout Forfarshire. If you want the house painted or put in order, apply to Mr Jack, painter and paperhanger. If you want your house furnished, apply to John Jack,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

cabinetmaker. If you want to pay your rates, you will find J. J. at the receipt of custom. If your clock is out of order, Jack, clockmaker, will leave his desk at the Public Library (where he is Secretary and Treasurer) and mend it for you. If you walk into the Free Church on Sunday morning, you will find Elder Jack at the plate, and presently you will see him walk into the precentor's box. If you attend a concert, Mr Jack is there, sings a solo, and superintends the programme. If a lecture is advertised, when you get to the hall you will hear a lecture, perhaps on bee-keeping, perhaps on capillary attraction, perhaps on the French Revolution, and the lecturer will probably be Mr Jack. If you want to get into the Poorhouse, or think yourself ready for the Lunatic Asylum, you had better see Mr Jack, Inspector of Poor, as soon as possible; and if you want to be buried, Mr Jack is the very man for you. In short, he is Jack of all trades and master of them all!

That is from the outside point of view; but we believe that his own modest aspiration is that it may be recorded of him at the end simply that he was one who "tried to do his duty."

**DR JAMES CROLL,
CARGILL.**



**SELF-TAUGHT SCIENTIST
AND METAPHYSICIAN.**

XXIII.

DR JAMES CROLL, CARGILL.



The life history of this remarkable man, who, by his own efforts and in spite of physical infirmities and other obstacles that to ordinary mortals might seem insuperable, rose from the humble position of a country joiner to that of leader and revolutioniser of scientific thought and investigation, is one of very deep interest. Many a one will feel that it is not so much by what he accomplished, however brilliant and significant the achievement, as by what he endured in the achievement, that he is enthralled; it is the triumph of mind over body, Carlyle's "Everlasting Yea" receiving a new exemplification, and simple faith in the Divine origin and government of the universe being justified and strengthened. Whatever happens, one is at least better for coming into contact, even for a brief moment, with such a pure and heroic spirit. He was born at Little Whitefield, in the parish of Cargill, on the 2d January 1821. His father, David Croil (as he used to spell his name), was a stonemason, whose progenitors had resided in the district for generations back; his mother, Janet Ellis, came from Elgin, and Dr Croll himself thus sets down their respective characteristics:—"My mother was firm, shrewd, and observing, and gifted with a considerable

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

amount of what is called commonsense. My father was mild, thoughtful, and meditative, and possessed of strong religious and moral sentiments. This amicable disposition made him greatly esteemed and respected, but he had the misfortune to possess a most anxious and sensitive mind."

HIS SON JAMES

was destined to resemble his father much more than his mother. In 1824 Lord Willoughby, proprietor of the village, having decided to convert it into a large farm, the families were allotted a choice of crofts either about a mile to the south-west or about three miles to the north, and it was thus that the villages of Wolfhill and Burrelton were formed. David Croil and his wife and family settled down at the former place, the house he built for himself being now occupied by Mr Thomson, builder. The site of the old house was in the garden attached to the farm of Little Whitefield, of which Mr James Blair is tenant. Owing to delicate health, even as a child, "Jamie Croll" got his first lessons at home; but he was ultimately sent to the Public School at Newbigging and a voluntary school at Guildtown. In after years the Doctor used to narrate a ludicrous incident supposed to refer to the teacher at the latter. One day he asked the boys:—"Which of all the prophets in your opinion most resembles the Apostle Paul?" An exceptionally dull boy, nearly always at the foot of the class, was the most anxious to be heard, and when he got the chance exclaimed—"It's yer ainsel', sir!" To the astonishment of the class the teacher treated the answer seriously, and in calm, matter-of-course style said—"That's a good boy; you go up to the top of the class

Dr James Croll, Cargill.

for that." The Doctor confessed that he was a rather dull scholar himself, never succeeding in acquiring an accurate style of reading, and by no amount of labour ever managing to be even a moderately good speller. More than that, up till eleven years of age he had little or no love for reading. One day, however, he was in Perth, and bought a part of the "Penny Magazine," and

THE TRAIN WAS LIT.

He got other parts, read Dick's "Christian Philosopher," Joyce's "Scientific Dialogues," and everything else he could lay his hands on dealing with physical astronomy, pneumatics, hydrostatics, light, heat, electricity, and magnetism. Principles, not facts, were the only things that interested him. Strange to say he had no relish for chemistry or geology—more particularly the latter, and he used to declare that had anyone told him then that one day he should be a professional geologist he would have regarded the statement as incredible. When between 14 and 15 years of age he was apprenticed as millwright at Collace; three years later he wrought as journeyman at Banchory; and when 22 years of age returned home and attended school at St Martins in order to acquire a knowledge of algebra. His next employment was as joiner, and his first job the new Free Church at Kinrossie, which was built in 1843 after the Disruption for the Rev. (afterwards Dr) Andrew Bonar, who was one of the first to note the distinctly metaphysical mind of the Wolfhill joiner. He followed his trade in Glasgow and Paisley, but in 1846, owing to a diseased elbow joint, had to give it up. He next found employment with David Irons, tea merchant, High

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Street, Perth, and through his kindness started for himself in the same line at Elgin. While here he married Isabella, second youngest daughter of Mr John Macdonald, Forres, the union proving a particularly happy one. After some three years there business fell away, and he returned to Perth. We next hear of his starting a temperance hotel in Blairgowrie, where the Perthshire Arms, Leslie Street, now is. It never succeeded, and after a struggle of a year and a half Mr and Mrs Croll sold off and went to Glasgow. There he got work as an insurance agent, and for various periods acted as such or as temperance agent in Perth, Dundee, Edinburgh, Leicester, and Paisley. After four and a half years of most uncongenial work, he abandoned it in 1857, when turned 36 years of age. This may be regarded as

THE TURNING POINT IN HIS CAREER,

for it was in this year that he published (albeit anonymously) his first book, the "Philosophy of Theism"—the outcome of much hard thinking on the most profound problem that can engage the human mind—the existence of the Great First Cause. The object of the little volume, however, was not to prove this existence but rather to investigate the proper method to be employed in order to do so. Dr James Morison, an acute theologian, founder of the Evangelical Union (with which body the metaphysical joiner had been associated while in Paisley) and an intimate friend of Croll's, regarded the book as an extraordinary production, and one London reviewer, recognising its merit, yet being unable to recognise its author among English thinkers, hazarded the shrewd suggestion that he might be a Scotsman, but as there was no one he knew

Dr James Croll, Cargill.

capable of writing the book, the author was probably a German. Back ten years before this, while he was in Elgin, we have something of the genesis of the book, for it was here he first became acquainted with Dr Edwards' necessitarian "Inquiry" into the "Freedom of the Will"—a book which made a profound impression upon him, and which he read and re-read five or six times. Years afterwards he declared it was the most fascinating volume he had ever met with in all his studies. Notwithstanding that, he could not reconcile his ideas of things with the doctrine that man was a necessitated agent, and procured Professor Tappan's reply. It disappointed him exceedingly, and led him on to the recognition of the great principle of "determinism," which he used with such telling effect in after years upon the leading "evolutionary" theories. Every organic power in nature, according to our author, is what it is in virtue of determination. The fundamental question in reference to the production of organic powers is not—what are the forces in action, or on what does their action depend? but, what is that which directs or determines these forces; what directs their action? The publication of the book led to his appointment in 1858 to a place on the staff of the "Commonwealth," a Glasgow temperance weekly. Eighteen months later

HE BECAME JANITOR

of the Andersonian College and Museum, and here he fairly revelled in his new and congenial surroundings. Papers of his on scientific subjects began to appear in the "Philosophical Magazine" and other periodicals, one of which, in 1864, dealing with the cause of the glacial

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

epoch, attracted the special notice of Sir Archibald Geikie, and led to his appointment as Resident Surveyor at Edinburgh of the Scottish Geological Survey. There is a beautiful story—the raconteur is no other than Lord Kelvin—of Croll having to sit his Civil Service exam., and getting “plucked” for arithmetic and English! It was pointed out by Sir Roderick Murchison and Lord Kelvin that Croll’s great calculations regarding the eccentricity of the earth’s orbit and the precession of the equinoxes during the past 10,000,000 years might be taken as fair evidence of his arithmetical capacity, and his book on “Theism,” as well as numerous papers in the magazines, as proof of his ability to write decent English, and as a favour the Civil Service Commissioners graciously allowed him to pass! Here he remained 13 years, writing during that period over 50 important articles dealing with abstruse scientific subjects. In 1875 appeared his great epoch-making work, “Climate and Time in their Geological Relations,” in which the great differences of climate which have evidently existed in the same regions at different periods, and which had been an unsolved perplexity to all previous investigators, were explained by him by the change in the eccentricity of the earth’s orbit. The leading idea he had expounded so far back as 1864, but the full and complete exposition was given in the new book. The masterly way in which the complex facts were grappled with and their true significance extorted from them won the admiration of the whole scientific world. His views

HAVE NOT BEEN OVERTHROWN

since. Grant Allen, reviewing the volume in

Dr James Croll, Cargill.

the "Academy," said—"It is impossible conscientiously to follow the marvellous logical procession of these subtle dissertations without feeling at once that we stand in the presence of a great thinker capable of working out mathematical and cosmical problems of the first order with extraordinary exhaustiveness, amplitude, and grasp. Not a line but carries with it absolute conviction." Yet the astounding fact remains that the author was not a "mathematician" at all, and performed his marvellous calculations by a sort of pictorial mental system of his own. On one occasion he had been calculating the light or heat received from the sun in a year, and sent the results to the late Professor Tait for examination. The professor sent him his geometrical formula, remarking "Which is what you make it." In 1876 he was made LL.D. by St Andrews, elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and Hon. Member of New York Academy of Science. Little mention has been made of his health, but the fact is he never knew what perfect health was all his life, a weak heart and intense pain in the head being his chief troubles. One day he over-exerted himself reaching up for a drawer of maps; something gave way about the heart, and he was laid aside for several months. He felt compelled to resign, retiring on a miserable pension of £75 16s 8d per annum, and with no alternative but for Mrs Croll and him to give up housekeeping, and go into cheap lodgings. After five years of rather unsettled life, during which he supported himself by writing, handicapped by increasing debility, he finally settled down at 5 Pitcullen Crescent, Perth. In 1885 appeared his "Climate and Cosmology," a sequel to "Climate and

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Time," and in 1889 we have "**Stellar Evolution.**" Some idea of his extremely enfeebled condition may be formed when it is stated that latterly he was unable even to dictate—writing had long been out of his power—for more than half-an-hour a day. Yet

THIS BRAVE SOUL,

conscious that he was started on the last short lap of life, with the swift runner Death close on his heels, drew himself together for a final effort, and just managed to see his farewell message to his fellow-men—"The Philosophical Basis of Evolution"—published, and hear a kindly welcome given it by the "**Times,**" when, with a sigh of satisfaction at the consummation of his life's task, he resigned his hold upon the world, falling asleep on the 15th December 1890. He was buried at Cargill, and his tombstone, which he had been at some pains to get erected himself, bears the following simple inscription:—

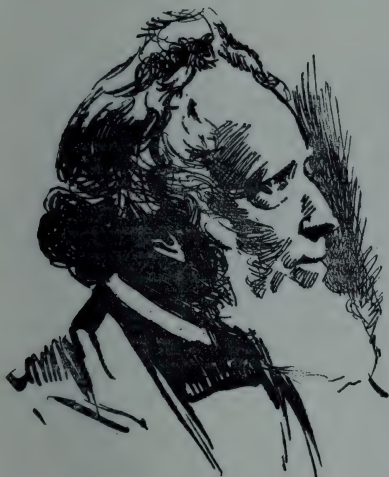
James Croll, LL.D., F.R.S., etc., etc.

Died 15th December 1890, aged 69 years.

Circumstances, not inclination, made Dr Croll a scientist; from start to close he was a metaphysician, and often expressed his longing to return to his first love. He never forgot his native place, and paid it frequent visits, usually as the guest of the Rev. G. C. Baxter, U.F. Manse, Cargill, who recalls many interesting anecdotes regarding his friend; the originality, intellectuality, and power attaching to his conversation; the earnestness, amazing lucidity, and force of his argument; most of all, the rare Christian simplicity and humility of the man.

ROB GAIRNS,

ST MARTINS.



MR. R. GAIRNS.

WEAVER AND RHYMER.

XXIV.

ROB GAIRNS,

ST MARTINS.

From Sir Walter Scott to Robert Gairns of St Martins the stretch is considerable, and the same might be said of oak and sprig of heather, both of which are admirable and lovable in their own particular ways. But, in whatever more, there was at least one link of kinship between the two rhymers in the fact that they both found their audiences at a comparatively late period of life. It is doubtful that the comparison ever suggested itself to the humbler votary of the muse, for he was the last man in the world to think of himself in any such connection, however nominal; but that he was over 40 years of age before he found "measured speech" for the expression of his ideas is sufficiently curious to arrest the attention of anyone taking up the facts of his quiet, uneventful career. He was born in the cottage of New Loudon, about two miles east of New Scone, Parish of St Martins, on the 12th May 1804, his father being a pendicler there. Rob got what education was going at the parish school, but most of his spare time was devoted to helping his father in one way or another. He was soon set to the weaving, and when the length of a young man could hold his own with any one in the district.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

He learned all about land and bestial, and, indeed, was able

TO TURN HIS HAND

to almost anything in a general way. By and by his father died, and Rob took up the burden of the household, managed the bit croft, wrought harder than ever at the loom, and bent his back to his work with good heart and determination, chiefly for the sake of his mother, for whom he had a great affection, and during whose life he chose to remain single himself. Meantime he was storing up those critical judgments on men and things which he was afterwards to utilise with such telling effect in his various effusions. He was noted for a keen, vivacious nature, which compelled him to go into everything that attracted him with characteristic whole-heartedness; as a great reader of books and periodicals, and gifted with a retentive memory; a ready and eager debater on political and social questions; a warm and generous and transparently sincere and likeable individual. He was the last man to be thought of in connection with anything savouring of guile or underhand dealing, and could not tolerate anything of the kind in others. Nothing delighted him more than "a crack" about current affairs, such as the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, both of which bulked largely in the public mind during the fifties; but probably he was much more at home discussing homely subjects, such as a ploughing match, a cattle show, a soiree, some point on the temperance question, or the annual dinner to the St Martins tenantry. No matter what it was, however, he was always a good-natured, companionable fellow, every one's pleasure in his company being equal to his own.

Rob Gairns, St Martins.

THE ANNUAL DINNER

was always a notable affair in the parish, and usually made the occasion of much speechmaking and the interchange of social amenities between Colonel and Mrs Macdonald of St Martins and the residents on the estate. Rob, of course, was quite in his element at such gatherings, and at one of them—about 1850—suddenly startled and delighted his audience by bursting out into a rhymed address. As he declared afterwards, the discovery “that in the way of speech-making he could express anything he wanted to say with more point, and remember what he had to say more readily in rhyme than in prose” was as great a wonder to himself as to his auditors, although it is not to be assumed that he did not prepare himself for this particular occasion, as he did for every other he appeared at afterwards. That he awoke next morning to find himself famous goes *sans dire*; and from that date forward it was Rob Gairns o’ St Martins at every possible function first and the other items as they chanced. No one enjoyed his popularity as laureate of the parish more than himself, and as he sat at the loom with a slate at hand on which he would record line upon line the thoughts and fancies with which he was to delight his forthcoming audience, this

Canny, simple Scot,
Wi’ bonnet blue and fustian coat,

was, according to his own description, in his “ain clay-biggie cot,” “unco happy.” Catch him, however, allowing a single individual to get a sight of his half-done work; he was too firm a believer in the Scots proverb for that. But at the soiree, dinner, or other function he would give

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

"aff luif" close upon 200 lines, on occasion, as freely as though the spontaneous utterance of the moment.

ROB'S PERSONALITY

added much to the effect of his effusions, being tall and well built, with a good head, a frank, open countenance, a loud, sonorous voice, and a general breeziness of manner that put every one in good humour before he had uttered a word. But when he got fairly under way with one of his productions, full of dry humour and pawky observations on men and things every one of his audience was perfectly familiar with, there was no question as to who was the man of the hour; and if Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as "at bottom a criticism of life" holds good, our friend was a poet of no mean order! By and by a demand arose for the publication of his pieces, and the wish was gratified by the issuing of a small collection in 1853, one of the outstanding features of which was his modesty. Here are a few instances:—

I'm nae a poet, nor a poet's son,
But to the rhymin' am begun,
An' sometimes try a verse for fun,
To pass the time;
If little good, nae harm is done
By my rough rhyme.

For me, my poetic mission is but sma',
I keep sae far doon I'm sure no to fa'!

My puir, simple muse has been almost asleep,
At best she's but weak and ne'er very deep.

Notwithstanding all that, his "bookie" ran out of print, and was succeeded by an enlarged edition in 1859, and a still further enlarged one in 1884. Here are a few specimens of his poetic wares:—

Rob Gairns, St Martins.

DESCRIPTION OF SPRING.

Our lang dreary winter is wearin' awa',
An' sune we'll get quit o' the drift an' the snaw;
The pairicks ha'e paired, the laverocks are singin',
The woods i' the gloamin' wi' blackbirds are ringin';
The peeweeps ha'e come, the craws they are biggin',
An' feuars an' cottars their kailyards are diggin';
The bee is impatient her work to begin,
She waits f r the bloom on the saughs an' the whin.
The bairns rin to play; puss to the housetap,
Reclined i' the sun, will there tak' a nap;
The pleughs which for months ha'e been a' frozen in,
Noo clear o' the snaw will straightway begin;
The farmers' work lately was near at a stand,
But noo they ha'e laid regular siege to the land;
My poor simple muse has been almost asleep,
At best she's but weak, and ne'er very deep!
But birds are a' singing, the flowers sweetly spring,
And nature is smiling—so, with them I'll sing.

ARNBATHY DAN.

Ye've heard o' Arnbathy Dan,
A weel-faured, hale, and powerfu' man;
Juist show's his marrow gin ye can

In carse or brae—

His heicht is twa yards an' a span
Frae tap to tae!

He rules his men wi' little din,
Kens weel that swearin' is a sin;
Ere to the leadin' they begin

He warns them weel,

Tho' sweat should owre their haffits rin,
To "ca' hale wheel."

There's no a man I ken ava'
Need ever try wi' him to saw;
With baith his hands he throws't awa'
As fast's he can.

The bauldest wind that e'er could blaw
Could ne'er stop Dan!

Ye may be sure he comes guid speed—
He'll forty auld Scotch acres seed;
Ilk kind o' land, an' what to gie't,

Be it corn or bear,

He kens: when brier'd let judges see't—
He doesna care!

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

In winter, when the day's no lang,
He'll twice to Perth for manure gang;
His maister ne'er said, "Dan, ye're wrang"
 This twa-three year;
He keeps baith men and laddies thrang—
 There's no ane sweer.

But yet he has a wee bit faut,
I scarcely ken what name to ca't—
It may be but th' effects o' maut
 In cups an' glasses—
But whiles he likes to hug an' daut
 The bonnie lasses!

POPULAR PIECES.

Want of space forbids quoting more, but among the most popular of his long pieces may be mentioned "Willie's Hay Stack," "The Ploughing Match," "St Martins' Concert," "Plash Mill," and "Strong Drink." Six years after the last edition of his book—on the 14th May 1890—our worthy old friend, tended by the loving hands of his daughter, breathed his last in the very cottage in which he first saw light 86 years before. He was sincerely mourned over a wide district, and many kindly recollections still cluster around the memory of the homely Rhymer of St Martins.

PETER REID,

FORFAR.



PETER REID

PUBLIC BENEFACTOR.

XXV.

PETER REID,

FORFAR.



There is that scattereth, yet increaseth.—Pro. xi. 24.

To the present writer the most striking feature in the career of Peter Reid, of Forfar, is neither his long life of persistent, plodding industry and thrift nor his great good-heartedness. Many other men have passed as laborious days as he did; it is to the credit of humanity that there have been others—although not in superabundance—like Andrew Carnegie, of our own time, who, having made their “little pile,” have desired that their less fortunate brethren should share in it to some extent even before the owners themselves had ceased to have any further use for it; but the spectacle of a man submitting to such protracted and unremitting grinding drudgery, under the spell of the “*auri sacra fames*”—so opposed to the spirit of generosity—all to end in returning his acquisitions to their original source, with compound interest, is sufficiently rare to excite more than passing curiosity. There seems to be only one explanation for such cases, and that is that the work is better than the pay—pursuit, not possession, is the real pleasure of the chase. Pity that poor millionaires did not realise this oftener than they do, and thus reduce their own ranks as well as

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

those of their opposites at the same time. Peter Reid, at any rate, was blest in that, while still far from his journey's end, he came to realise that the business of being happy prospered most by forgetting all about it, and in seeing what could be done for other people in that way, and lived long enough thereafter to enjoy the fruits of his conviction. He was born in Forfar on the 6th October 1803, the youngest of a family of three. His father—Peter also—wheelwright to trade, came from Brechin to Forfar in 1790, and four years later opened what was to be the genesis of

THE GREAT "FORFAR ROCK" BUSINESS

in the form of a small grocery and confectionery shop near where the round well stands at the top of Queen Street, then known as Back Wynd. Betsy Reid, Peter's wife, kept the shop, while Peter himself attended to his own trade—an honest, industrious, "weel-doin'" pair, the two of them, anxious in good old Scottish fashion to "bring up their family respectable, and to pay their way and be respeckit." After a short spell under one of the local dominies, young Peter was sent to Forfar High School, the Headmaster of which at that time was one Gibson. It is interesting to note in passing that it was to a former Headmaster of this school—James Clarke—that Burns wrote on his deathbed (26th June 1796) asking the loan of a pound. Peter was a brisk, intelligent scholar, with quite an average schoolboy's love of mischief, and even more than the average love for pet animals—a trait which he exhibited all through life. After leaving school he was sent to learn the loom; by and by the shop becoming a rather pros-

Peter Reid, Forfar.

perous little concern, particularly in the confectionery department on account of the rock, which was becoming familiar in the mouths of youngsters all over the district at a great rate, he was kept at home altogether in order to assist in the manufacture of the toothsome commodity. On the death of his father in 1827, the young confectioner was called upon to take charge of the growing "establishment;" and eleven years later, when his mother followed, the business had greatly increased, and the two brothers and the sister—William, Peter, and Margaret, none of whom were married—settled down more strenuously than ever to gather "the gear" which was to benefit their native town in such a marked manner in later years. And regarding the famous "rock" itself: it will have been inferred from the foregoing that this was not the discovery of Forfar's great benefactor, nor of his father either, according to tradition, which runs to the effect that a grateful gipsy woman confided the secret of its manufacture to Peter's mother in return for some kindness the latter had done her. The family kept the secret well, and wrought it for all it was worth for the matter of fifty years. It proved a veritable gold mine; but if the profits on the rock were great, the work, for many years at any rate, was very hard, until the hand "tawing," as it is termed, was superseded by machinery. But our friend was a veritable glutton for work, and kept all intrusive recreations and holidays and

GOSSIPY NEIGHBOURS AND SWEETHEARTING,

and other such like dissipations and distractions strictly on the other side of a triple-barbed wire fence, within which not even that insinuating

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

creature, my Lady Nicotine, or that jolly dog, John Barleycorn, was allowed to enter. He had but one real love in life, and that was his work, and to that he was loyal. Business with him was strictly "pleasure and profit" in one. As might be supposed, he was seldom from home, but on two occasions at least he managed to get the length of London, intent upon learning as much as possible of the newer methods of making confectionery. Both occasions were by boat, and on one, it is said that when paying his bill in a hotel, he remarked to the waiter that there were evidently "ither places besides barbers' shops far a man could be shaved!" The great hulking metropolis was nearly capturing him for all that, and he was immensely impressed by the infinite possibilities for rock consumption which it offered. In imagination he saw all the windows everywhere stuffed with nothing but Peter Reid's famous Forfar rock—people tumbling over each other in their anxiety to get supplies—every man, woman, and child going about the streets munching away the whole day long at the delectable delicacy he was so deeply interested in. What a sweet prospect! He was so taken with it that had it not been for Margaret, his sister, who objected to make the change, the probability is that he would have succumbed to the temptation, and Forfar known him no more. What that might have meant for his native town it is useless speculating, the chances being as likely one way as the other. Years passed on. Both William and Margaret had slipped away—the latter in 1868—and Peter was left alone. Over 50 years of unremitting application to work, assisted by the possession of a very lucrative monopoly, had brought him in a large fortune; but the loss of

Peter Reid, Forfar.

his brother and sister, his nearest relatives, and so intimately associated as they had been with all the engrossing affairs of his circumscribed life, doubtless gave him a lonely feeling. His own end would surely come—how soon or late he knew not—and there was that heap of siller of his. What should he do with it? Then it was that the idea—an idea which had first occurred to him as a note of ambition when he was a mere youth of 20 years—of erecting some worthy memorial to perpetuate the name of his family and benefit his native town at the same time took full possession of him, and the splendid Reid Hall was the result. The foundation stone for this edifice was laid with full Masonic honours by the Earl of Dalhousie on the 6th August 1869, the whole town being en fete to a degree never witnessed before or since. The procession of trades, Freemasons, volunteers, public bodies, &c., numbered between 3000 and 4000, and was over a mile long. The hall was only opened one Saturday night in May, 1871, Peter being

TOO BUSY IN THE SHOP

to bother about such trifles. The cost was £10,000 from first to last. A convalescent ward to the Royal Infirmary, at a cost of £700, was his next gift. Then came 1892, when he beat his own record by handing over to the town a public park of 13 acres, part of it tastefully laid out, and adorned with lodge, drinking-fountain, &c. Not to mention other benefactions, it is calculated that Forfar was made the richer by over £25,000 in one form or another through the open-heartedness of her worthy son. Not without opposition in certain quarters, and unkind things being said about him in others, was it all done, however. And, in good sooth, this old man was a strange

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

compound at best. His unconventionalism, both of word and act, was proverbial. With respect to the former, while credited with many witty and humorous "obiter dicta," his jokes were too frequently served "au naturel," or so highly spiced they fired the palate. Touching his manner of life, it could hardly be expected that ordinarily built church-goers would express complete satisfaction with the man who, with his brother and sister when they were alive, never entered a church door from one year's end to the other. These were the "unco guid," doubtless, but it is to the credit of the man that their opinions regarding him never made the slightest difference in his behaviour towards the public, and he went on with his schemes for the raising of the status and ideals of the working classes, the brightening of their lives and homes; the nursing and comforting of them in sickness and distress, and otherwise making everyone the better for his presence in their midst, in his own unsanctified way to the end. He was equally obstinate in doing much good elsewhere, it being said there was hardly a charitable institution in the country he did not subscribe to. It was a curious twist in his nature, however, that made him charge a halfpenny for every half-crown he changed! In line with that is the story of the remission of the sugar duties. Between 1820 and 1840 he used to inveigh vehemently against the corn laws, unequal representation in Parliament, and other grievances—above all, the iniquitous and unpardonable duty upon sugar, which was such a hindrance to the development of

THE GLORIOUS ROCK.

industry. By and by the duties did come off,

Peter Reid, Forfar.

and, like Goldsmith's dog, which, "to gain his private ends," went mad, bit a respectable religious man, and—died of blood-poisoning, the unexpected happened, for, instead of giving the public the benefit of the improvement, he made his sticks of rock a little smaller. In the same category was his persistent refusal to give discount, even when as much as £10 worth of rock was bought. The two aspects of the man are brought out in the story of a lady coming into the shop one day ordering £1 worth of rock, and suggesting that, as it was for charitable purposes, he should make a reduction. "Not a farthing!" exclaimed he, and the full amount was accordingly handed over with a grudge. That being settled he asked a few questions in a casual sort of way about the object the lady was interested in, and finding it worthy, returned the £1 as his contribution to the fund, remarking with a twinkle to a gentleman who was present and saw the transaction that one had to "take care no to mix business wi' charity." That the real character and goodness of the man were recognised and appreciated by his fellow-townsmen was shown in many ways, amongst others by electing him to the Town Council in 1869, in which body he rose to the dignity of Provost in 1881, retiring in 1884. He served on the School Boards also for some time. During the last three or four years of his life, this genial lover of his fellow-men began to feel the infirmities of age—he was over 90—to the extent of being more or less confined to the house; but, with his simple tastes and long life training in the lessons of self-restraint, he was quite happy in his friends and his books, and in watching the growing prosperity of his numerous charitable schemes. He passed quietly

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

away on the 16th January 1897, and nothing fitter comes to mind with which to close this sketch of a remarkable and lovable man than his own quaint saying, "The Lord will hae to ca' awa' a gey while afore he gets my shoon filled!"

XXVI.

LILY HARRIS, AN OLD BLAIRGOWRIE CHARACTER.

Something between a hindrance and a help.

—WORDSWORTH.

Lily (or Lillias) Harris was born at Little Fardle, in the Lower Stormont, about the year 1730—a century too late and in the wrong parish to participate in the doings of Jenny Geddes; but there can be no question as to the attitude she would have taken up on that memorable occasion in St Giles's Cathedral had she been present—the probability being that a couple of stools instead of one would have been sent flying at the minister's head. So far as history or tradition is any guide she is the nearest approach to Jenny that the district has produced. She grew up to be a good-looking young woman of somewhat uncertain temper, a great reader of the Bible and religious books, much given to disputations about points of doctrine, abrupt and eccentric of manner, and a believer in good, honest, straightforward speech. There was a sort of "aloofness" which clung to her all through life, and what "Lily" said or did came to be recognised as among the things that mattered in the district. She married David Chalmers, Hilltoun of Mause, near Blairgowrie, and as she grew older, all her peculiarities became accentuated, culminating in

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

complete mental derangement after the birth of her third child, which she persisted in believing had been

CARRIED OFF BY THE FAIRIES.

Thenceforth her sole business was to find out where the little people had taken her bairn, and many a dangerous adventure she had in her wild search, night as well as day, up and down the banks of the River Ericht, which runs through a deep ravine just below the Mause, its precipitous walls at that time—and not much else even now—being one dense mass of tangled brushwood, down which she would clamber. For a while she used to be accompanied by some of her friends, but by and by she was left to her own free will. One night, which was a turning point in her life, she had a fearful experience in a thunder storm, in which she came upon the Witches Knowe, caught the fairies at their revels, with the queen—thrice welcome sight!—in their midst, clasping her long-lost child in her arms! Lily rushed forward with a cry, but a huge black monster—beyond doubt the Deil himself—confronted her in the shape of a bat, grew bigger and bigger and more frightsome the longer she gazed upon it, and she was compelled to seek the shelter of a tree, followed hard by the Evil One. Turning upon him defiantly, however, she repeated the opening lines of the 46th Psalm, the tree went over with a great crash, and the demon

“GAED AFF WI’ A FLUFF”

just as the first streak of dawn appeared over the hills of Glenballoch. Something like that was Lily’s account of the affair when she reached home in a sorely bedraggled condition that morning; in any case she had passed a terrible night, and

Lily Harris.

from that date she was completely cured of this particular hallucination. All her life long, however, she was a "character," the privileged censor of high and low, and a great "sermon-taster." Many of her whimsical sayings have obtained currency beyond the district. Nothing irritated her more than affectation on the part of a preacher, whether this took the form of using the "paper"—for so she seemed to regard it—or was shown by voice, gesture, or otherwise. She usually attended the Parish Church, where she sat under three ministers in her day—the Rev. James Lyon, 1723-1768; the Rev. William Dow, 1769-1786; and the Rev. James Johnstone, 1787-1836. In passing, it may be noted that Mr Johnstone was the "fule body" that advised "the Lady Pitlyal" in Miss Graham's clever "Mystifications" "to gae to law," although Lord Jeffrey declared it was "very sensible advice." One day, however,

A STRANGER WAS IN THE PULPIT

who stuck close to the abhorred "paper," and Lily was so wroth that, not willing to wait till after the church was out to express her opinion of it, she kept up an audible running commentary during the delivery of the sermon itself—ear-marking the various sources of the preacher's eloquence in a very uncomfortable manner for that individual. "That's John Bunyan," she muttered after a fine passage. "That's William Law," came a minute or two later on. "That's Jeremy Taylor," was the next comment. Then—"That's Giles Fletcher!" and the mere man in the pulpit could stand it no longer. Looking over, he ordered the beadle to "put Lily out!" Lily laughed her scorn. "*That's* yer ain," retorted she, "an' gin that paper were ta'en oot afore ye, ye'd be as ready to gae oot as I am!" Her rest-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

lessness and readiness to pass remarks upon what was going on in church were particularly annoying on Sacrament Days, and it is said that 5s was given her on one occasion on the understanding that she was to keep quiet and "behave herself." She did so as long as she could; but the service had not proceeded far before she shocked every one by rising up and "dingin' doon" the money on the floor with the contemptuous remark—

"HAE, THERE'S YOUR SILLER;

I'd rather hae my liberty!" Two other places of worship she liked to attend occasionally were Lethendy and Littleton of Rattray Secession Churches. The latter was the precursor of the present Mount Ericht U.F. Church, Rattray, which was U.P. before the Union. The site of this old church, built in 1762, is indicated by a stone in the dyke on the right hand of the road to Alyth, opposite the row of cottages known as "Beavershire"—a name given, according to local tradition, on account of the male members of the little community being very partial to "beaver" head covering at one time. The inscription on the stone reads—"Littleton Kirk, erected 1762; ruined 1792." The Rev. James Henderson was ordained first Secession minister in the year of the church's erection, and the new church was built on what is now the garden of ex-Provost Robertson, Old Rattray, the style of the church having resembled the present Parish Church on a smaller scale. The present (Mount Ericht U.F.) church was built in 1835. In the early days of the Secession at the Littleton worship used to be conducted in a tent on Sacrament days, and the behaviour of the younger people was frequently the reverse of decorous.

Lily Harris.

On one occasion Lily was present, and things being not to her mind at all, she stood glaring indignation all around her, while every one else was seated. Some one offered her a seat, which she refused, and immediately repeated these lines with a marked impression upon her audience :—

- With persons vain I have not sat,
Nor with dissemblers gone.

At the Reisk—which was the name Lethendy Secession Church was known by—the scenes on Sacrament days, as mentioned in a former article, were frequently of a most disorderly sort. Whisky tents were erected just outside the church, and both between the “tables” and after the service was over the “ongaein’s” were such as would not have disgraced Burns’s “Holy Fair.” The Rev. Mr Balfour, who was the first placed minister (ordained in 1787), was a man of great force of character. His great standing abhorrence was the Pope, against whom he was forever fulminating in the good, old-fashioned, thorough-going style—very wearing upon the binding of the pulpit Bible. No one enjoyed his onslaughts more thoroughly than Lily, who was wont to declare that “if there was a Pope at Rome there was a Luther at the Reisk,” and the minister came to be known as “Luther Balfour” from this saying of hers. Lily’s hatred of sham was shown one day when a Mr Smith from Coupar Angus preached, and was the subject of much critical remark from his hearers afterwards. Lily listened to the talk but said nothing until some one asked her opinion, when

SHE GAVE THEM THEIR QUIETUS

by remarking—“I dinna wonder ye didna like Mr Smith, for the Deil didna like him ayther.” When the Rev. Mr Young was elected minister

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

of the Secession Church at Logiealmond he preached at the Reisk before being ordained, and Lily had to be there to pass judgment. She caught hold of the preacher before he entered the church, and scrutinised him from head to foot. "The ootside man's weel eneuch," said she at last, "but I want to ken what the inside can dae." The sermon was evidently all that his critic could desire, for at the close she stood up in the church and exclaimed in a loud voice—"Behold the chosen of the Lord! Arise and anoint him." She had been absent from the Parish Church for some time, and one of the elders meeting her took it upon him to reprove her, warning her of the consequences of such conduct, and winding up with—"Mind ye, Lily, ye'll get nae preachin' in the bad place." "Guid sakes," exclaimed she, "it'll no be for want o' ministers!" A dandy young preacher who was doing the rhetorical business in grand style had

A TERRIBLE FALL

at her hands on one occasion. He had got the length of his peroration, and after standing for some little time in a very graceful and impressive attitude, with his right hand in his open waistcoat, he suddenly stretched out his arm to emphasise a brilliant point, when the incorrigible Lily gave a new turn to his thoughts—and those of the congregation—by putting the momentous question—"Was it a louse or a flech, sir, an' gat ye it a' richt?"

This strange woman finished her course in 1807. Her sister, Isobel, who married another David Chalmers (cousin of Lily's husband), was the progenitor of a number of well-known families in Blairgowrie district.

**WILLIAM GEDDES,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



WILLIAM GEDDES.

**ARTIST
AND
BONHOMME**

XXVII.

WILLIAM GEDDES, BLAIRGOWRIE.

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.—WORDSWORTH.

It is interesting to note the large percentage of house-painters in Blairgowrie during the present generation who have proved themselves the possessors of outstanding ability in the domain of art proper. At the head of the list, "facile princeps," stands David Farquharson, A.R.S.A., whose paintings of Scottish scenery are amongst the most charming to be seen at the Exhibitions and most sought after in the market. He served his apprenticeship to the house-painting business with the late G. M. Dickson, Blairgowrie, whose humble workshop seems to have had some occult power of its own for inducing and fostering artistic tendencies, seeing that not only do we have the artist named, but, as his fellow-apprentices, William Geddes, whose name heads this article; William Dickson (son of G. M. Dickson), whose landscape and fish pictures are yearly growing in public favour; and James Reid, a native of Rattray, who has developed into one of Scotland's most successful decorators, as witness the interior of the M'Ewan Hall, Edinburgh, which is his work. Mention must be made also of the late John Bridie (dealt with in a former article) and Matthew Pollock, still at his trade in Blairgowrie, but with some very fair fish pictures and other artistic work to his credit. William Geddes

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

DIED AT THE EARLY AGE OF 43,
and there is as little pleasure as profit speculating what he might have become had he lived longer; it is sufficient for us that he lived long enough to do such excellent work as has left behind him regrets that he was not spared to accomplish more, together with a host of kindly remembrances of his genial personality. He was born in 1841, and gave early indications of his special bent, which probably suggested the happy idea of sending him to the house-painting, and thus giving him the chance of painting his own name on the scroll of fame in as bold letters as he could. In July 1853 he accordingly started off on his "career" with 2s a week, and the afore-said capital fellow-apprentices to keep him company. His time expiring, he went to Edinburgh, and while following his trade is said to have attended some classes there, but this could not have been for any length of time. The most important event here, there is little doubt, was his marriage, which took place when he was 23 years of age, and it so happened that the clergyman who performed the ceremony—Dr Macdonald, North Leith F.C.—was the same who, as minister of the First F.C., Blairgowrie, had baptised him. After his marriage, feeling encouraged by the recognition which he had been receiving, he resolved to devote himself entirely to the art he loved so well, returned to Blairgowrie, and settled down there. In

HIS EARLY CAREER,

figure and genre work, mostly groups illustrative of Scottish life and manners, and with a humorous turn, engaged his brush—his unsurpassed fish pictures, by which he is chiefly known, arriving later on. Amongst public recognitions of his merits may be mentioned a gold medal

William Geddes, Blairgowrie.

and £50 for the best genre painting in the R.S.A. Exhibition of 1882, and the bronze medal and diploma (highest award) for a fish painting at the Fisheries Exhibition (London) in 1883. The best paid commission that ever came his way was in connection with Andrew Carnegie's first return visit to his native town, Dunfermline, when a painting of the free-handed millionaire and his family was executed, for which, it is understood, the Blairgowrie artist received £500. Another memorable episode in his life was a couple of months' study at the Louvre in 1871, just after the Franco-Prussian war. One day he was arrested as a spy. It was entertaining to hear his account of this historic affair; how the *gens d'armes* marched him off to the Hotel de Ville, while he tried all the way to explain that he was only an artist; the suave, but firm, Frenchmen, who pretended they did not understand *guid broad Scotch*; and the providential appearance of a brither Scot who could talk French, and was able to make it clear that our friend was un*Ecossais*, non *Anglais*; the sudden conversion of the officials, their humiliation, and his jubilation, condescension, and glorification, finishing up by driving off in a *cabriolet* at the French nation's expense and amid a perfect ovation. He revisited the gay capital four years later. Geddes' nature was so thoroughly imaginative, and so sensitive to the

Love and beauty everywhere
In all their moods and tenses,

that he could have scored success in many other walks of art beside those which claimed his first allegiance had he so chosen. As

A FIGURE AND FISH PAINTER

—more particularly the latter—he is so well known that nothing more is required here. He

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

showed marked ability as a modeller, also, one of his best essays in that line being the "sweir-tree"—two boys, seated, with a stick between them, and tugging at each other for victory—which was exhibited in both Dundee and Edinburgh. That he could wield a facile pen all his correspondents know; the arrival of one of his letters was always an event. Above all, he was the most sociable of mortals, a witty and original conversationalist, with a perennial fount of first-class humour. He abounded in good stories, which never lost anything in the retelling, and never failed to "fetch" his audience. There was not one of the many brothers of the brush who put in an appearance at Blairgowrie as regularly as the swallows but would sooner have missed seeing Loch Clunie or the Muirton or Haermyre than passing a night with Geddes, king of good fellows; and it was in such congenial company as that of David Farquharson, the late G. W. Johnstone, Hugh Alan, William Dickson, Tom Scott, Michael Bown, James Spindler, T. Austen Brown, and T. Burnett—nearly all Academicians or Associates of the R.S.A.—whether at work in the open or over a pipe or glass after the light was gone, that he was to be seen and heard at his very best.

GEDDES' STYLE OF NARRATION

counted for so much in his reminiscences—he was a splendid mimic among other things—that it suggests substituting a palette of colours for a picture to retail them. That reference recalls one of his own experiences. On one occasion a swell critic, just stepped out of a fashion-book, called to inspect a picture our friend was at, and while backing away from it to get a better view, inconsiderately spoiled 5s worth of good paints by sitting down on the

William Geddes, Blairgowrie.

artist's palette which was on a chair behind him. Three "p's" came to grief—the palette, the paints, and the pants, and the upshot was that a pair of Geddes' unmentionables had to be requisitioned before the exquisite could appear in the streets. As the Blairgowrie artist was under medium height and the oaller near six feet high, the result may be imagined. He used to make a good thing of the experiences of two Blair notables, Hugh and William, slater and mason respectively, who started off one morning for a job at Merklands, but succumbed to the attractions of Bridge of Cally Inn for three days. On two days they struggled bravely forward about a couple of miles, but were that "sair forfochen" they could not walk another step—in a northerly direction—but had to return south to the inn for recuperation. On the third morning, when they awoke and discovered their whereabouts, said Hugh to his companion in tribulation—"Ay, Willum, as Scripture saith, 'And the evening and the morning were the third day.'" While still an apprentice, an old lady relative, not noted for her generosity, got our friend to devote all his spare time for weeks to papering and painting her house—on the strength of huge and mysterious promises—"juist wait, and he would see, he would," what she had in store for him. Well, when

THE JOB WAS FINISHED

entirely to her satisfaction, he got a small packet put into his hand very impressively. "There, laddie," said the old angel, "tak' that, and I'm sure ye weel deserve it!" After many speculations on the way home as to whether it was a sovereign or half-sovereign or only a couple of shillings, he opened the packet to find two nice cough lozenges inside. He had a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

tricycle for a while, received as payment for a picture—and it was a wonder and a terror under his control. He rode it as if it was a horse and he was out on a steeplechase. Fixing on a point he wanted to get at, straight for it he went, lifting or pitching the ironmongery over dykes and hedges, dragging it over ploughed fields and through ditches in a manner that would have astonished the makers. At one moment it was a reaper and binder, at another a potato digger, or it might be only a useful road scraper, but whatever it happened to be there was always infinite sport in it for Geddes and his confreres. One of his strongest characteristics was a love of animals. He seemed to have some secret power over them, and was every now and then catching rabbits, squirrels, birds, and other creatures of the open. He had a pet monkey once, but it died on his hands, and for a while he was inconsolable. This trait in his character came out touchingly in his will, in which he left everything to his widow with the exception of a favourite terrier which he bequeathed to a friend.

ONE OF THE CLEVEREST

of his jeux d'esprit was in the form of a letter to a Dundee friend; it got into the papers at the time, and is here reproduced.

“Dear T——,—A curious fellow turned up here the other day—with dash a copper or even a pouch to hold such an article. He wasn't even in rags, but was literally without a single rag to cover his nakedness. He either could not or would not give any name, and reason he would not, but kicked up a bonnie how-d'ye-do, until for very peace sake we were glad to provide him with some clothes. With difficulty we got the

William Geddes, Blairgowrie.

fellow put into decent condition, then offered him something to eat; but at this he got perfectly furious, and would take devil a thing but drink. I believe the rascal lives on drink only. He appears to be a very old fellow, too, for he is absolutely bald-headed and toothless. He gave my wife a bonnie fright, I can tell you, and the doctor has been in attendance upon her ever since, but has hopes of her getting over the nervous shock. He thinks that we should see that means are taken to prevent another such unexpected visit. The impudent fellow has taken up his quarters here anyhow, and, so far as I can see, is not likely to budge for some time. I hope that Mrs T—— and you will come through as soon as possible, and advise us what we should do with the fellow.”

The recipient of the letter was somewhat puzzled at its contents, as were all his male friends, more or less. Finally the letter was submitted to three of their wives, who promptly designated them a set of donkeys. Beneath all his fun and drollery and bonhomie, however, were

THE RADICAL FEATURES

of our friend's character—his perfect honesty and truth and deep sympathetic nature. It was impossible to conceive of his ever doing or saying anything mean; and as he was the most trustworthy of friends, so was he also the most affectionate of husbands and fathers, which made the parting all the more difficult when it came, as it did, after a long and trying illness, one night in October 1884, with wife and children assembled around his bedside.

His oldest son, Ewan, is a young artist of promise, who has exhibited in London, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, &c. He is an R.S.W.,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

and advancing in his father's footsteps—landscape and genre being his particular forte. "Marah," the pen-name of the deceased artist's oldest daughter, is familiar to readers of her bright little stories and sketches in the "People's Friend" and other periodicals. Heredity counts for some little thing after all.

**JOHN C. SPINDLER,
DUNDEE AND
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



JOHN SPINDLER.

MUSICIAN.

XXVIII.

JOHN C. SPINDLER,

DUNDEE AND

BLAIRGOWRIE.

Mirth that after no repenting draws.—MILTON.

In some respects John Spindler's personality was the most fascinating with which it has ever been the writer's privilege to become acquainted. His sparkling wit and caustic humour, his originality and versatility as a conversationalist generally, would have made him a first favourite almost anywhere, quite apart from his exceptional gifts as a musician; but when all this concentrated mental force, this fascicle of surcharged nerves and faculties, was found connected with one of the most fragile bodies that ever had to do duty as the earthly tenement of a poor imprisoned spirit, it was a combination rare enough to impress everyone with astonishment, more or less, according to temperament. To the writer, who knew him only as a confirmed invalid, he was always the most perfect instance of the triumph of mind over body he ever knew. Rheumatism had made him a "bundle of nerves," causing intense suffering at times, yet he

MUST HAVE HIS LITTLE JOKE

at his own expense, declaring that he had as much electricity about him as would have enabled him to light the gas merely by touching

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

the pipe with his finger. His lower limbs were rendered useless by his trouble; he joked about the difficulty of getting his legs stretched. He had a very severe illness even for him—it was premonitory to the one which carried him off—during which he sank so low that his end was expected every minute, and his relatives and friends had been assembled around his bedside. The extraordinary vitality of the man enabled him to recover, however; and one day the writer went along to see him in his convalescence. He was as lively as ever, and gave a wonderful account of his sensations when the crisis of his illness was reached. He became unconscious, and felt as if he was falling down a deep pit—down, down, down, sunshine and day and sky and all sense of surroundings melting gradually away, and only one bright little star left shining in the infinite heights above him. Suddenly there was a flash, and he opened his eyes to find the sorrowful faces of his friends looking down upon him, and these were the first words he uttered—“What are you all standing there for? One would think you were at a funeral!” Dealing with the origin and training of our friend, we learn that he was born in Dundee in 1846—where his father had come from Edinburgh some years before and settled down to what was to be

A LONG AND HONOURABLE CAREER

as a teacher of music. Johnny, the boy, attended the High School, where he was known as the “fighting one” by one set of his fellow-scholars, and as the “boy who could speak like a book” by another. “Jim” Whytock and he were about the same age, and inseparable companions. Many an adventure they had together. They were very partial to walking tours, when they could get away, and more

J. C. Spindler, Dundee and Blairgowrie

than one out-of-the-way village—in Fife particularly—was honoured as the scene of their lively but harmless escapades. After leaving the High School, John, who was musical from top to toe, resolved to follow his father's profession, and started off studying and teaching at the same time. He was a great worker, and used to begin practice as early as 6 a.m., and was busy at one thing and another up till a late hour at night. About this time the new German method of training the hand for the piano began to be greatly discussed in Dundee, and the young and energetic "professor," perceiving the value of the system, and the importance of obtaining tuition at headquarters, determined to go to Germany. Accordingly, although even then making a very fair living, considering his youth, by his work, he threw it up, and became a student at Stuttgart. It goes without saying that he was not long there before he was a

FAVOURITE WITH EVERYONE

—not excepting the Professors. One of these, when the bright young fellow—he was not out of his teens then—was in his second year, singled him out for the unusual distinction of appointing him teacher of a number of English pupils; while another tried hard to get him to settle down in Stuttgart altogether. He had other plans, however. One of these Professors got a lesson himself from his pupil. He had an annoying habit of coming in late to his pupil, having been always, apparently, purchasing apples, at which he kept munching away during the precious hour. John saw a lovely prize apple—as red as a peony, and as big as a turnip. This he purchased, and put in a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

conspicuous position on the piano. It caught the Professor's eye at once.

"You young rascal of a Scotchman, what do you mean by that?" asked he as he annexed the apple.

"Oh," replied the innocent youth, he thought the master liked apples, and so he need not spend any time buying one that day.

The Professor smiled, and disposed of the fruit as per usual, but took the hint, and always gave him a full hour thereafter. It was while in Germany that such flattering things were said about his literary gifts—particularly for description—that he was greatly of a mind to flout music and bestow his attentions upon the sister art. Home ties and duties, however, kept him to his first love. He returned to Dundee, and in a short time had a good clientele. Fourteen years of incessant toil, in the very same house where his father had taught for 40 years before him, may be blamed for the breakdown of his nervous system which followed.

"Oh, dear me, Mr Spindler," exclaimed a gentleman on meeting him on the street, "do you know I have been suffering very badly with noises in my ears." Said the tired manufacturer of young pianists—

"I do sympathise with you, my dear fellow. I have to suffer noises in my ears for seven hours a day ten months in the year."

A DIFFICULT SUBJECT.

But no matter his own health, his great happiness was in doing his best to contribute to that of others. He used to pride himself upon his success in that line; there was almost a professional touch in it. The worse the subject to be operated upon the greater the effort and skill

J. C. Spindler, Dundee and Blairgowrie.

he would put forth to secure the inevitable triumph which followed. One day during the holidays he was among some friends out from Dundee. As usual, he was the life of the gathering, but one stiff old Free Church minister resisted all efforts to make him thaw. He was like an iceberg, everybody else glowing and beaming in the sunshine of our friend's geniality but the austere cleric. To him, therefore, special attention was directed by the man who was bent upon making him happy in spite of himself, and by and by he had the satisfaction of excoiting a smile. This was encouraging; he redoubled his efforts, and was ultimately rewarded with a genuine laugh, after which the enemy became demoralised, and joined in as hilariously as any one present. At supper the old gentleman said grace, and thanked God "for the good things provided at this festive season, but very specially for the enjoyable merri-ment and cheerful entertainment given by our young friend." On hearing which "our young friend" gave the shins of one of his intimates such

A KICK BELOW THE TABLE

as nearly caused an explosion, which would have been very prejudicial to his newly "acquired merit." When his health fell away all Dundee seemed to rally around the brilliant young musician, whose career was thus blighted so suddenly, and public esteem found expression in the tangible form of a memorable concert in the Kinnaird Hall, organised by the leading musioians of the district. It was shortly after this that Mr Spindler, accompanied by his devoted sister, the artist, whose pictures of Perthshire, Forfarshire, and Fifeshire scenery are known throughout the three counties and much

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

farther afield, took up residence in Blairgowrie, and there remained till his death. His old friends, such as the late Mr Whytock, jeweller, and the late Mr W. Reid, of the "Dundee Advertiser," as well as others, brightened his life by their correspondence and occasional visits—the latter memorable days as much to the visitors as to the invalid. The sadly premature death of Mr Reid in December 1889 was a blow from which he never really recovered, and which he did not survive more than a few weeks. Seven weary years he was subject to the most excruciating sufferings. "'Borne with Christian patience!'; see you put that down!" he said one day with a grim smile after a dreadful spasm. It was a resolute fight to the finish between him and death; and when at last he failed to come up to time on that night in January 1890, the "hard-favoured tyrant" himself must surely have smiled down with admiration upon such a valiant foe.

BAILIE ISLES,

BLAIRGOWRIE.



Mr. Jas. Isles.

A HUMOROUS FELLOW.

XXIX.

BAILIE ISLES, BLAIRGOWRIE.

Excellent! Why, this is the best fooling when all is done.
—TWELFTH NIGHT.

Bailie Isles, although a comparatively young man, has been before the public now for many years, and his claims to notice are various. Most important of course is his antiquarian treasures, which comprise one of the best collections in Perthshire; but there is no doubt that his musical and social qualities, his bonhomie as Chairman and otherwise, his ability to sing a good song and tell a good story, and his readiness to identify himself with a popular cause bulk more largely in the imagination of the public. The latter like amusement, and they are never balked when their favourite Bailie undertakes to supply it—in one form or another. Recently he has taken a leading part in the opposition to the Town Council's Wellmeadow scheme, and first-class entertainment may yet be looked for in that connection; the Bailie is in dead earnest, which is always a guarantee of good comedy business. One great advantage our friend has, in addition to his other qualifications as a popular leader, over many of his opponents is his being a "Blair boy." His father, James Isles, was a highly-esteemed wine merchant in High Street, and it was in his shop

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that, first as assistant and later on as successor, he got his ideas of the business he was to carry out in after life. The late Mr John Inch and Mr Peter Sturrock were responsible for his early education, and not

A FEW GOOD STORIES

are connected with the "young barbarians" of that period. Our friend, however, was quite a model boy; it will interest his many friends to learn that he once carried off first prize for good conduct and Bible knowledge. Old Peter Sturrock was a great believer in the tawse and other persuasive agencies, and the boys, as might be supposed, tried to get even with him on every occasion. The result was ructions on a large scale sometimes. One of these took place on a certain morning when the fail-me-never needle had been carefully fixed with the business end up in the master's chair, down upon which he dropped in leisurely fashion to take his usual peep at the morning paper. It was in the dead of winter, but if ever there was an early spring it followed one second thereafter, with a sudden rise in the temperature to blood-heat and boiling-over point in no time—every boy in the school reaping the benefit thereof. Volcanic eruptions were of frequent occurrence in that school, but this is not a treatise on seismology. Another schoolboy story shows us Jamie Isles and three other youngsters down the Ericht fishing, and one of the latter accidentally whipping his hook in the throat of the former. What a fix! The boys did not see how to get the hook out, and never thought of cutting the line, so the four miserable young beggars marched solemnly up the river side and through the town, one on each side of our friend,

Bailie Isles, Blairgowrie.

and the other carefully balancing the rod over his head behind. It would have taken a Du Maurier to do justice to the appearance of the quartette when they reached Dr Lunan's surgery door, and tried to get in with the rod and the line and the hook in the greetin' fish and the two supporters, gules, all in order arranged as aforesaid; then the doctor himself appearing, cutting the line and pulling out the hook reverse way, to the astonishment and delight of everybody. Antiquarian tastes may run in the blood, apparently, for Mr Isles, senior, bequeathed a fair collection of curios to his son, who has taken up the running to such purpose that it would require a respectable pamphlet to do justice to his belongings in this line. The collection embraces a large number of prehistoric, Roman, and ancient Scottish relics, MSS., &c., to a considerable extent local, but including many items from other parts of the country and elsewhere. He is an F.S.A. (Scot.), a member of the new Spalding Club, &c., and, it may be added, is only too pleased to show his treasures by pre-arrangement to any enthusiasts like himself. In 1876 our friend entered the Police Commission, and was made Bailie in 1882, retiring in 1885. 'Aince a Bailie aye a Bailie,' however, holds good in Blairgowrie if anywhere. He is also a J.P., and thereon hangs a tale. It will be recalled that just before the election in 1889 Mr J. W. Carew, M.P. for Kildare, was accused of uttering speeches inciting to unlawful acts, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He came north and spoke at one of Sir John Kinloch's meetings at Blairgowrie. The warrant followed him up, but had to be endorsed by a Perthshire J.P., and it was our friend's destiny to have his beauty-sleep broken in upon to perform that

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

function. For the terrible wiggling he got in the House of Commons afterwards for his share in the business he meekly murmurs, "Virtue is its own reward," and consoles his chastened spirit with the knowledge that at least a score of admiring and solicitous fair ones are each of them happy in the possession—how could he deny them?—of the identical pen which he used on that historic occasion! With other good points the Bailie is distinctly musical, and is one of the "three B.'s"—

Three Bailies in two famous counties born—
Forfar and Perth—Blairgowrie did adorn:
The first, in loftiness of thought surpassed,
The next in wit, in melody the last.

Blair has already produced one world-famous tenor in Durward Lely; it is no exaggeration to say that Nature would have required little coaxing to produce another in the third "B." above had he chosen to undergo the process. His "My Pretty Jane," "Sally in our Alley," "Tom Bowling," and many more such never fail to please his audiences—sympathetic voice, perfect ear and taste being supplemented with that incommunicable something without which the other qualities count for little. He is one of the oldest members of the Choral Society—it is 33 years since he first sang alto in its ranks. Since then he has undertaken the tenor solos at many of the Society's concerts, and otherwise furthered its prosperity. He has been President for a considerable number of years past. Musical relations have produced many of his most amusing experiences. One of the earliest was at a concert at Meiklour, when a noisy character at the back of the hall was causing frequent interruption. Our vocalist stopped short in the middle of

Bailie Isles, Blairgowrie.

his song and threw down the gauntlet in these terms, "If that fellow over there will go outside for ten minutes I'll settle with him afterwards."

"That fellow" went out right enough, but the hanged thing was that he kept bawling through the key-hole every now and then, "Is that deevil no comin' oot yet?" Here's a good religious story with a nice moral. On one occasion the Bailie was staying at a hotel in the north where there happened to be a clergyman who was not only a good preacher, as it transpired, but a splendid hand at "nap." His manner was "childlike and bland." The cool, business, methodical way in which he scooped in all the loose shekels lying about and entered his winnings in his notebook was really very tiring to the circle of wretches who had thought they had a tame pigeon to pluck. They gave up playing in disgust. After totting up his little book his reverence dropped the remark that they had been helping forward a good cause, although they didn't know it. "£2 12s 6d is not a bad contribution to our Smaller Livings Scheme!" "Your what?" exclaimed the chorus. "Our Smaller Livings Scheme. For sharpening up one's play, gentlemen, there's nothing like having one of the schemes of the Church in view. Just you try it!" Well, they didn't just there and then all take solemn oath they would follow his advice, but did the next best thing to it, for, on the suggestion of our Blairgowrie vocalist, a concert was organised, and brought in a further acceptable sum towards that S.L.S., much to the gratification of its zealous advocate. Once, when among the London Scottish at Wimbledon as a Captain, he was called upon for a song, mounted a platform accordingly, and was in the middle of "We'll hae nane but Hieland bonnets

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

here," when forward came a stalwart policeman, ordered him to desist, threatened to report him, &c., &c., all in true official style. The vocalist was reassured, however, when the guardian of the peace "teugged" his tunic in passing, with a stage whisper, "Gae on, gae on; ye're daein' fine; never min' me!" It turned out he was a Perthshire man. On another occasion he was the guest of a gentleman in London, and it was suddenly arranged that the Bailie should do the

"NOBLEMAN IN DISGUISE"

street singer business. A young lady offered to accompany him, so the two sallied forth, chose a likely spot, and Signor Islesi started off with "My Pretty Jane," followed with "When Other Lips," "Thy Voice is Near Me," &c. An old lady made an encouraging start with a three-penny bit. A gentleman passing tendered sixpence, "spotted" the joke, and invited the couple to tea. A large crowd gathered, windows were thrown up in the neighbourhood, and coin came in freely. An old gent. dropped a florin in the lady's palm, asking "When Other Lips" again. Result—another florin and an invitation to his house to sing, and be duly paid for it. That didn't suit their programme, however, but the two gentlemen exchanged cards in regular dramatic style, and the adventurous couple passed on to fields and pastures new. There another dear old lady gave them a ld to sing "My Jane," and stood wiping her eyes during the performance—whether on account of the song or the singer is an open question. A shilling was sent out from a grand house; thereupon, from the one opposite—jealous lot, evidently—issued a gorgeous butler with a sixpence and a polite request to "move on!" Our

Bailie Isles, Blairgowrie.

lady friend, who had been money-taker all the time, happening to show her gloved hand, the fellow as he retired was heard muttering something about the "bloomin' cheek of those 'ere society street singers!" and the parties thus apostrophised could not help laughing outright. The net result to a certain charity of a couple of hours' amusement was just as many pounds. Besides being something of an actor also—as witness his "Tattie Roup" and "Political Meeting"—he is a bit of an artist. At least, he used to be when the late William Geddes, famous for his fish and genre pictures, was alive. It hasn't the slightest connection with the present subject, but somehow the story crops up of the late Duke of Edinburgh and Sir Arthur Sullivan—musical pupil and tutor respectively—to the effect that on one occasion the Duke declared he would set certain words to music "as soon as Sir Arthur Sullivan returned from the Continent." Touching our friend, however, qua artist. He once made a beautiful painting of the six Druidical Stones on the Essendy Road, known locally simply as the "Standing Stanes." This chef d'oeuvre he exhibited to all his friends for

THEIR CANDID APPROVAL,

which they gave with greatest readiness, never one of them asking any unpleasant questions. When he showed it to Geddes, however, that artist took a long, fond look at it from several points of view, turned it upside down, went through the same process, and finally returned it to its original position. "Not a bad thing that, Isles," said he at last, "but you should have put a boat in it." "A what?" exclaimed the painter of pictures; "what the mischief do you want with

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

a boat at the Standing Stanes?" "Great Scott!" exclaimed the other artist, dropping his pipe, "I thought it was Marlee Loch!" After which date our friend always saw that his pictures were properly labelled. But, whatever happens, and after all is said and done, when the Bailie plays up to his best he is accepted everywhere as a "jolly, good fellow," and can always take good-natured chaff in the same spirit in which it is given—no one better. To him all apologies and condolences.

**JAMES BAND,
BLAIRGOWRIE.**



COUNTRY HANDYMAN.

XXX.

JAMES BAND, BLAIRGOWRIE.

Not in the roll of common men.

—SHAKESPEARE.

The strong traits of individuality so characteristic of the opening years of the past century have, as has been frequently remarked, almost disappeared in the present day, owing principally to the greatly increased travelling and reading facilities now available. The old order of natural and independent development in rural districts had not quite passed away when James Band, the subject of the present sketch, was born on the Braes of the Carse about the year 1829. What schooling he got was very little, and his parents being both engaged in farm work, he was only a boy when sent to work on the farms in the district. In after years he wrought as ploughman, cattleman, &c., in various parts of the Carse and the Valley of Strathmore; then he became tired of the work, and was goods porter at Blairgowrie Railway Station. After a few months at this, he threw up the job, and started as vanman to a Blair firm of grocers. But although he peregrinated the country for a number of years retailing his employers' goods and his own jokes with equal readiness and acceptability, it was not until he entered the employment of Mr William Davie, ironmonger, Blairgowrie, that the square man and the square hole seemed to come together, and he developed all those

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE HANDYMAN

which distinguished him thereafter till his death—which took place in 1898—many years after the business had passed into the hands of Mr W. Kirkwood. Here he found demands incidental to the trade made upon him for the exercise of mechanical skill in a large variety of forms, such as the fitting up of ranges, grates, &c., and the multitudinous character of his achievements was a marvel to the ordinary five-eighth man. There* was probably nothing that Jamie Band would not, with duty and credit as inducements, have attempted. He was a splendid hand at laying the fancy tile-hearths seen in gentlemen's mansions—none better in the district; and whether in forming a section of the pavement, building a wall, or closing up rat-holes, he had no superior with his cement or concrete, his pail and trowel. He was equally good at putting in grates and ranges as at window panes; could fit a key to a lock, or a lock to a door, or a door to a room; could paint a shed or make one; and, in short, was not to be beaten by anything in wood or iron. During the winter of one year he managed in his own spare time to make a two-wheeled barrow and a spring-cart (wheels excepted)—all completed and painted in fine style. No production of any coachyard could have give uhim such satisfaction as when he first used the spring-cart for business purposes, seated on front, with pipe in full blast, and a look of triumph on his honest countenance, which he was well entitled to. He is even credited with attempting to repair a grand piano. The story is worth telling. Many years ago, when "Penny Readings" were in vogue, the want of a piano for accompaniments was a "long-felt want," and

James Band, Blairgowrie.

Miss Speid of Forneth kindly offering an old "grand," Jamie was sent out on a lorry for it. One or two of the wires being broken, the donor asked our handyman whether he could not mend them, and he, with no more idea of music than hoodie-craw, and with a notion that this was much the same as repairing a wire fence, expressed his perfect readiness to

TRY HIS HAND AT THE NEW JOB.

Assisted by the coachman, the piano was uncovered, and, unappalled by the complex mechanism which met his gaze, he went at it with a will, hammering and screwing and twisting things about till he had a dozen strings curling all over the place instead of a couple. Ultimately he had to close down the lid in despair. "Man," said he to the coachman, "there's something kittle about the guts o't, but I'll guarantee I'll twist her up a' right whan I get her to Blair!" It turned out an expensive experiment for the Committee, and in after years if Jamie was asked how he was getting on with piano-tuning he immediately "sang dumb." Amongst other duties he had the making up of orders in the seed-lofts during the spring months, in which department he posed as a great authority. There was a seed-cleaning machine driven by a crank-handle on the premises, and upon this he attempted many improvements, one being the substitution of a small steam-engine for the hard work its manipulation involved. The seed mill when in motion was always a great attraction for the school children, with whom James was a prime favourite. One little fellow, who had never seen any kind of engine except a locomotive, stood gaping at it one day for a long time, keeping at a safe distance all the while, but apparently greatly disappointed. At last he

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

turned away in disgust, exclaiming, "Sic an engine Jamie Band has !—it canna move oot o' the bit !" Great as his pretensions were as to the qualities of seeds, he was no less an authority on their cultivation, and as an amateur gardener he took a high position in the local Horticultural Society, and had his employer's garden under his charge. Spring was the busy time in the warehouse as well as in the garden, and he usually got wofully behind with the latter. Yet, no matter how busy he was, he was most decidedly unwilling to receive assistance, and appeared jealous of any interference with what he happened to have in hand. One spring affairs got out of joint to such an extent that a stranger was put in the garden. Well, he didn't survive long, for the day was hot, the work dry, and the worker ditto, while, as fate would have it, the garden was very steep. The result was that the newcomer lost his balance and went rolling down hill into a sturdy old gooseberry bush at the bottom, where he was discovered bruised and bleeding by our friend Jamie, who didn't conceal his jubilation at the discomfiture of the enemy, and in having a chance of clearing him off the premises.

A VERY DEFECTIVE MEMORY

caused him to fall into many awkward mistakes in the naming of people and things. He was never at a loss for a word, his plan being, apparently, a phonetic one of his own invention. A well-known variety of rose was invariably called by him "Glory to John ;" his greatest favourites in bedding-out plants were "gerāānums," the foliage of which was admired for its "bonnie green *huge* ;" and nothing pleased him better than to make up "a grand *bucket*" for any lady visitor. One of the latter asked him if he had "propa-

James Band, Blairgowrie.

gated" a certain plant. "No," was his reply, "I didna '*profligate*' that ane; I got it frae Bob Brechin!" He was a great believer in naked truth and Scotch neat; naturally, therefore, he had nothing but contempt for the "'*unfrequented*' wine" some congregations affected at their Sacraments. It must be recorded that his successes were not always commensurate with his efforts, and that he didn't always arrive at the port he set out for. He generally started off with the assurance that he was to "pit archetectry in't," but from want of plan and inability to arrange details he not unfrequently got so mixed up that he had to call a halt and confess the "job was bouched," and make a new start. He could not concentrate his attention for any length of time on any particular job—and no wonder, considering the extremely miscellaneous character of the demands made upon him. He was continually mislaying and losing his tools, but there were plenty more in the shop, and if an ironmongery shop wasn't for supplying workmen's tools, what was it for? One unprincipled fellow was heard to say "it was aye worth while watching where Band was working" in order to profit by his forgetfulness. But Band would forget other things. He would become so absorbed in his job, whatever it happened to be, that he would

FORGET ALL ABOUT HIS FOOD,

and go steadily on till he had carried out his idea. He has been known even to forget to draw his wages, coming back in a fume accusing himself for his stupidity by remarking, "The daftest man gaein' kens Martinmas ar' mealtime!" Nothing pleased him so much as to be asked by householders to exercise his skill in putting things right that were causing domestic discomfort. If a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

smoky vent was the nuisance he had original ideas for improving the draught. If the washing boiler was foul, with a bottle of vitriol he made everything clean and sweet. So when firebricks required to be replaced in a grate or an ashpan to be made, or outhouse to be covered with felt or corrugated iron, a garden to be enclosed with wire netting to keep out the hens—or a thousand-and-one other jobs, Jamie Band was the salvation of many a ruined temper and distracted housewife's heart. And it could be said of him that he was like nature herself—he never did the same job twice in the exact same way, and the man who expected to find any new-fangled “interchangeability of parts”—or wholes—in what he did was doomed to disappointment. Each job stood upon its own legs, and had a character all its own—in fact, a child might understand the job was done by Jamie Band. And “Ane dune, aye dune,” was his motto. On one occasion he fixed in a range as a prospective cure for a smoky grate. It was “fixed in its everlasting seat” so securely that nothing short of taking down the house seemed adequate for its removal, should that be required. “And if it doesna dae after a’,” said the doubtful housewife, “an’ has to be ta’en oot again?” “Wife,” said Jamie, significantly, “the day that range has to be shifted, I houp I’m at Kirk-michael!” He was very

HUMAN IN HIS PLEASURE

at other people's approval of his work, and those who expressed it always stood correspondingly high in his favour. A very “pernickity” customer once tried his patience to such an extent that he was heard to say—“Naebody could please him; he’ll no be pleased when he’s deid!” Having a

James Band, Blairgowrie.

stock of paints at his command, he became great at mixing colours, although some of his tints were difficult to name. A well-known local house painter used to make great fun of "Professor Band," but said Professor had his revenge out of him on one occasion. A garden seat, which the critical painter had got from Jamie's employer to paint in oak, had been neglected so long that the "Professor" started to paint it himself, and managed to please a purchaser with the work. Along came the house painter, who, casting a scornful glance upon the seat, glistening with new varnish and ready for delivery, declared it would not do at all. "Dae!" exclaimed Jamie, "it maun dae! An' hoo muckle better are you? If I canna dae't, you winna dae't!" One day he had a neat, sly dig at a local banker, who had transferred his vote shortly before from the Liberal to the Unionist side. Jamie was painting the gate at Millbank in one of his own patent and strictly copyright shades, when the gentleman referred to stopped and inquired—"What colour do you call that, Band?" "Od, man," said the Radical painter at once, "d'ye no ken? That's Salisbury green!" His interrogator passed on without another word. But by far the most ambitious and most amusing incident connected with his work as a painter was a conjoint affair between him and the late James Crossgrove, tinsmith, decidedly clever in his way, and, among other things, a bit of an artist. It was in 1887, the late Queen's Jubilee, and the two determined to become collaborators in the painting of a banner which should

ASTONISH THE WORLD.

Accordingly a disused loft was selected as the workshop, safe from the scrutiny of

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

“fools and bairns,” and the design agreed upon—a half-length portrait of the Queen, with an angel on each side holding a wreath of some sort over her head, while beneath was to be the legend—“Long Live Queen Victoria.” Each of the artists was intensely jealous of the other, but as Band could not draw, Crossgrove had, perforce, to be allowed to outline the bust of the Queen—copied from a favourite calendar. But the angels were a staggerer, and not all their combined imagination, working at 2-donkey power, full steam on, was of the slightest avail in conjuring up satisfactory outlines for these celestial beings. A brilliant idea struck our handy man, and he speedily unearthed from a dusty corner of the shop an old-fashioned coffin plate, on which were a couple of first-class angels. These James the artist made an enlarged sketch of. Prospects brightened, and immortal glory was shimmering down upon our friends when the tinsmith insisted upon having a quantity of black paint with which to do some shading and bring out the white figures better. Jamie Band, however, flatly declined, sternly declaring he “widna alloo a single smodd o’ black aboot the angels.” On this the other James threw down his brush and threw up his job, and the Queen wept bitterly when she was informed of the banner which was never finished. What became of it is one of the historic mysteries which will probably never be solved. But we must agree to a halt. During the spring of 1898 our friend suffered from a severe attack of influenza, and on the forenoon of Sunday, 17th April, while the church bells were ringing, our friend breathed his last. Few men in his position were better known; no one was better liked for his obliging disposition, his pawky manner, his truthfulness, and sterling honesty.

NIEL GOW.



**SCOTLAND'S
FAVOURITE FIDDLER.**

XXXI.

NIEL GOW.

A fellow most musical.

—WOLCOT.

Between Burns and Niel Gow, as has been remarked before this, there is a strong affinity. What the one did for Scottish song, the other did for our dance music, and both were supreme in their respective lines. At least they were the day before yesterday, when "The Unspeakable Scot" settled poor Burns' fate—Niel having mercifully escaped somehow. Scotland—and Burns—stand where they did, however, all the same, and Sydney Smith's surgical operation is still as necessary as ever to see the English joke. That Burns and Niel actually met is one of the most interesting facts we have about them. This happened on the 31st August 1787, when the Inver fiddler was in his sixtieth year and the national bard in his twenty-eighth. The latter was on his Highland tour at the time, and has the following note of the event:—

Friday.—Walked with Mrs Stewart and Baird to Birnam top. Fine prospect down Tay—Craigieburns hill—Hermitage on the Braan Water, with a picture of Ossian—breakfast with Dr Stewart. Niel Gow plays—a short, stout-built, honest Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest, social brow; an interesting face, marking

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

strong sense and kind open-heartedness mixed with unmistrusting simplicity. Visit his cottage—Margaret Gow.

Tradition is still lively about Inver and Dunkeld regarding the remarkable occasion. Burns, it is said, accompanied by his friend William Nicoll—identified with “Willie brewed a peck o’ maut”—put up at Culloden House Inn, and breakfasted with Dr Stewart, a well-known fiddler of the district. During the “crack.” the Doctor happened to quote into immortality four lines from some local rhymster:—

Dunkeld it is a little town
An’ lies intil a howe,
An’ if ye want a fiddler loon,
Speir ye for Niel Gow!

Burns is said to have speired, and Niel duly appeared on the scene. We can easily imagine the honest, social grip and greeting these

TWO CONGENIAL SPIRITS

gave each other on entry. The old fiddler played a selection of his own compositions, Dr Stewart joining in, with one Peter Murray, another native of the district, at the bass. Niel’s “Loch Erroch-side” took the fancy of Burns so much that he asked a copy of it, and afterwards wrote his “Address to the Woodlark” for it. (The tune is best known, however, as that of the “Lass o’ Gowrie.”) At the poet’s request Niel gave his “Lament for Abercairney,” as well as “M’Intosh’s Lament.” The worthy Doctor followed with “We’ll Tak’ the Highway,” said to have been composed expressly for the march of Dunnock Mhor and his men to Bannockburn, where they arrived just in the nick of time to assist in making history. The writer of “Scots Wha Hae” is said to have

Niel Gow.

shown strong emotions during the playing of the tune. After "Tullochgorum" and other favourites, the party adjourned to Inver Inn, where tradition has it that Burns wrote some lines, as was his wont, on one of the windows, the glass of which was afterwards broken in trying to get it out, but is believed to be in existence yet. Amongst other Burnsiana is that of the poet's borrowing—ahem!—one of Niel's Sunday "sarks" for a prospective call upon the Duke of Atholl the following day. There is pathos in the thought that although the Inver fiddler came into the world thirty-two years before the poet, he survived him by eleven years. As everyone knows—

Famous Niel,
The man wha played the fiddle weel,

WAS BORN AT INVER,

a pretty little clachan near the mouth of the Braan, about a mile from Dunkeld, on the 22d March 1727. Another home-grown stanza—it will read backwards almost as well as the orthodox way; surely some fiddler wrote it—bears witness that—

Niel Gow was as guid a fiddler
As ever drew a bow,
His dwelling-place was Inver,
And his name was Niel Gow.

His father, as an honest weaver, tried to make one of Niel also, but nothing is heard of his achievements in that line; whereas we learn that before he was 13 he was a fair player, and it was thought worth while to get John Cameron, a fiddler of local repute, to help the persevering self-learner on a stage or two farther. The pupil was so apt, apparently, that in 1745, he

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

then being 18 years of age, he carried off first honours at a great fiddling bout with his own teacher and eight other dead-earnest players, including Daniel Dow, as his opponents. Johnnie M'Craw, a blind fiddler, who had been selected as judge for obvious reasons, gave himself away after the award by declaring that he could "tell Niel's bow amang a hunder players!" which shows how early Niel's style had developed, the most telling characteristic of which was his remarkable up-bow. Every one testifies that in later years the dancers seemed to be fairly lifted off their feet by its exhilarating effect; and when, on the change from the strathspey to the reel, he cocked his fiddle in the air, swept the strings with mighty arm, and gave a rousing Highland "Hooch!"—he made the dancers

BOUND FROM THE FLOOR

"like grasshoppers." He was very fond of "chords" and even discords at times; the former for power, the latter for brilliancy. Altogether his playing must have been a remarkable performance—one gentleman could liken it to nothing so much as "an organ at full gallop!" To Burns' notes regarding his appearance may be added that he was nearly six feet in height, "erect, firm, square-built, and lithe and active in his movements"—a perfect specimen of a Highlander. His frank, genial character, quite independent of his musical abilities, would have made him a favourite anywhere; but, with these in addition, he was one of the "primeest sort" to be met with in a generation or a century. And the man who could stroll through the streets of Edinburgh in familiar converse with the Duke of Atholl, Lord Melville, and Lord Lynedoch; was a welcome guest in every mansion in Perthshire;

Niel Gow.

and had his portrait painted at least four times by Raeburn, was something very different from the fictitious character evolved from the "Farewell to Whisky" myth. Amongst other social qualities, he possessed a great fund of excellent humour. The stories about him are legion, and can only be sampled. One of the best relates to a professional engagement of a week or more at Abercairney, where a brilliant company had assembled. One morning there was a regular downpour of rain, and everybody looked the picture of misery. That did not suit Niel at all, so, seizing the skeleton of an old umbrella—without a shred of cloth on it—which happened to be in the servants' hall, he sallied forth, and, with the bare ribs tilted above his head at the correct angle to meet the pelting rain, he strolled past the windows of the breakfast-room, where the party was gathered. There was

MUCH LAUGHTER

as he appeared, and Abercairney, throwing up the window, shouted to him, "Hillo, Niel, what's wrong?" "Oh, naething wrang at a', Abercairney," was the reply; "but it's an awfu' mornin'. an' I'm sae gled I brocht my umbrella!" From the same genial host Niel borrowed £5 on one occasion, to be repaid when he was "flusher" of cash. Years rolled on and off again without any word of repayment, when one night, just as Niel was about to start playing, Abercairney, wishing to get fun out of him, called out in a loud voice, "Niel, when are you going to pay that £5 you owe me?" "I would be the last man to mention it, sir," was the quick response, and the dance was dashed into instanter. The Duke of Atholl and he had many a bout together of one kind and another. There

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

is a good story of his Lordship's taking Niel to see a grand room in Dunkeld House, which had just cost over £100 for varnishing. Niel invited him over to Inver, and he would show him a room in his own humble dwelling which had cost much more. The Duke smiled, but, "unbeguiled, he saw the snare," and duly appeared at Inver, only to be shown

THE OLD FIDDLER'S KITCHEN,

black and glossy with the "smeek" of many hundred loads of peats which the owner calculated came to more than the sum named. These two had a wrestling match one day, when the Duke threw Niel rather heavily, and the Duchess, who was looking on, expressed the hope that he was not much hurt. "Naething to speak o'," replied he; "but it was my ain faut for being sic an eedit as to wrassle wi' sic a big fule!" Said "fule" caught two salmon one day while Niel was by. "What shall I do with these, Niel?" asked he. "Weel, gin I had catched them, I had offered the Duke ane." The Duke laughed, and turning to his keeper, told him to "throw the beggar one of them!" Niel's cottage and his favourite oak near the river, where he liked to sit musing and fiddling in the summer evenings, are still to be seen. His drinking cup, with his initials carved on it, is at Blair Castle; the late Queen had her first sip of "Atholl brose" out of it on the occasion of her visit with Prince Albert in 1842. Like the man of St Martin's, Niel was "sair ta'en oot," and played at gatherings not only all over Perthshire, but in neighbouring counties, in Edinburgh and elsewhere. One morning in Edinburgh, having played at the Caledonian Hunt Ball the previous evening, he strolled into

Niel Gow.

a musicseller's place in Princes Street in order to purchase a new bow. The shopkeeper, poor man, mistook the heavy-bonneted, loud-voiced, stalwart Highlander for some simple country bumpkin, and offered him a number of cheap things. These our friend pushed aside contemptuously, and

ASKED FOR SOMETHING BETTER.

The shopkeeper, sniffing at this presumptuous fellow as something come "between the wind and his nobility," handed him one of the dearest bows in the shop, priced at 25s. The ignorant countryman gave a smile of satisfaction, took hold of a fiddle with some rosin on the strings, and, looking about for something to try over espied one of his own tunes—never properly identified—which had just been published, and asked the musicseller to hand it to him. He did so with a smile, remarking that if the fiddler would only play over the piece without halt or mistake he would make him a present of the bow. "Done!" exclaimed Niel, and done it was, in a style that fairly "floored" the rash shopkeeper. "Surely you saw that piece before!" gasped he at last. "To be sure I did," was the reply; "I saw it fifty times when I was makin' it!" Our fiddler had certainly a very "guid conceit" of himself. The late Dr Muir, of St James', Glasgow, used to tell how, when a young man, he was once in Dunkeld Parish Church, and observed an "old Highlander, with broad forehead and thin hair," staring at him harder than "might be thought well-bred." When the minister came out, the old man came to him, and after some blunt but kindly questions, said, "Ye come frae Glesco, dae ye?" "Yes."

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

“Then,” answered the interrogator, with a look of importance which no language could describe, “I am

THE FAMOUS NIEL GOW,

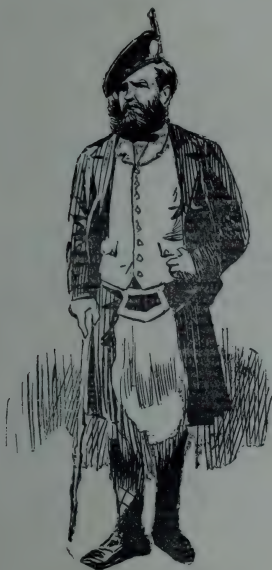
weel kent in these pairts!” On another occasion he was having a night’s fiddling at Meikleour with Sampson Duncan, a good player also. Turn about they went at it. Then Niel, appealing to Charlie Thomson (grandfather of Mr Dewar, Cleaves), asked—“Wha’s best, Charlie?” “Deed, ye’re baith guid!” was the cautious reply. “Ay,” said Niel, “weel ye ken that Sampson’s as guid’s me; only, ye see”—and here he drew himself up—“he hasna the fame!” The father of Scottish dance music

WAS MARRIED TWICE,

and had a family of five sons and three daughters. Niel himself composed about ninety tunes; Nathaniel about two hundred; John and William a considerable number, and Niel, the grandson, a few—including that gem, “Cam’ Ye by Athole,” the words being by James Hogg. From Niel’s birth in 1727 till Nathaniel’s death in 1831 a period of over a hundred years was covered by the whole family, all the succeeding members of which worthily upheld the reputation of its founder. In all, over three hundred dance and other tunes are the legacy they left for an everlasting delight to blithe-hearted and light-footed Scots all over the world. The old man passed quietly away on the 1st March 1807, aged 80 years, and now rests in Little Dunkeld Kirkyard, where a stone was erected to his memory by his sons, Nathaniel and John. And it comes about that

Time and Gow are even now;
Gow beat Time and Time beat Gow.

“ DUNDONACHIE : ”



**DEMOLISHER OF PONTAGES
AND METAPHYSICAL SYSTEMS.**

XXXII.

“DUNDONACHIE.”

He knew what's what, and that's as high
As metaphysic wit can fly;
Whatever sceptic could inquire for,
For every why he had a wherefore.

—HUDIBRAS.

“Dundonachie!” What a host of stirring memories is associated with that name to those who can recall its owner's tall, swank figure as he used to stride through the streets of Perth and Dunkeld in the early sixties! He was in his prime then, and a splendid-looking Highlander; no one ever became the kilt better; the broad-brimmed, well-cocked, well-feathered “Balmoral” better; looked more to the manner born “Chief” of the proud Clan Donnachaidh that he claimed to be. He never failed to attract notice, and when, later on, he became identified with the Dunkeld pontage agitation he was the cynosure of all eyes wherever he went.

POOR DUNDONACHIE!

That is how one feels, remembering the change which less than a decade of years wrought upon his fortunes, and even his appearance—a change which, let his motives have been as mixed as his worst enemies allege they were, was the direct outcome, it can never be forgot, of efforts which resulted in lasting good to the whole community in the form of the Roads

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

and Bridges Act of 1878. The present writer's purpose is to give a brief history of this interesting struggle as clearly and as comprehensively as circumstances will allow, together with some account of the literary side of Dundonachie's character, which is not so generally known. Alexander Robertson was born at Dunkeld on the 25th January 1825. His father, Alexander also, and native of the same place, carried on an extensive business as joiner and contractor for over 50 years, doing the joiner work of a large number of gentlemen's houses all over the countryside, dying in 1857 highly esteemed by the whole district. Young Alexander was educated at Dunkeld, and afterwards at Perth Academy; served his time to the banking business in the Dunkeld branch of the Commercial Bank; and in 1845 proceeded as accountant to the Cromarty branch—an illustrious predecessor of his there being none other than Hugh Miller, who had gone to Edinburgh in 1839 to undertake the editorship of the "Witness." It is a coincidence, to say the least, that the young and

AMBITIOUS DUNKELD ACCOUNTANT

suddenly developed a fierce enthusiasm for geology, and was to be seen smashing away at the rocks in the district on every possible occasion. If neither name nor fame resulted therefrom, no harm was done—unless it happened to be a disagreement which is said to have arisen between our friend and the bank agent, and which led to the former tendering his resignation and coming on to Perth, where he started as coal and potato merchant. After six or seven years of this, he removed to Strathord, and finally returned to his native place, where he set up at Birnam as coal, lime, and wood merchant, and gaining the patronage of the Duke

“Dundonachie.”

of Atholl, who was his best customer for several years, established a splendid business for himself—one result of which was the erection of the villa up Strathbraan from which he derived his popular cognomen, and probably another, that he assumed the headship of the Clan Robertson. But “Dundonachie” or the “Chief”—his spirit was one of those which would

Eat into itself for lack
Of somebody to hew or hack!

and, long before the destruction of toll-bars and the abolition of pontages became the absorbing business of his life, it is something of the nature of a surprise to find him preparing to wage “grim-visaged war” in such a totally different sphere of activity as metaphysics—intent, no less, upon a *Novum Organum* of his own which was to

KNOCK THE BOTTOM OUT OF

all the great philosophical systems of the world, and make the solution of the problems of the ages as easy for the man in the street as pressing the button—the “new principles” doing the rest. The first tangible indication of this great design was in the publication, in 1864, of a small volume entitled “The Laws of Thought.” It was well received by the press, and went through several impressions. Encouraged thereby, his next step was to apply for the Chair of Moral Philosophy, which happened to be vacant, in the University of Glasgow; and that the Highland metaphysician did not lack faith in his own abilities is evident from the terms of his application, which ran as follows:—

To the Secretary of the University of Glasgow.

Sir,—I beg to request the favour of your placing my name on the list of applicants for the Chair of Moral Philosophy now vacant.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

I feel justified in taking this step, because—

(1) I am able to show that atheism and scepticism involve contradictions, and may therefore be negated.

(2) That I can produce a mathematical demonstration of the existence of God. (The solution of this problem, *which has hitherto baffled metaphysicians*, will revolutionise philosophy.)

(3) That I can treat philosophy as an exact science. (At present it is taught merely as a rule of thumb, or according to the whim of each Professor.)

Should the Patrons desire evidence in support of these qualifications—*which no other candidate will pretend to*—I shall gladly afford satisfactory proof of their validity.

I am, sir,

Your very obedient servant,

ALEX. ROBERTSON,

Author of the "Laws of Thought."

Well, the Senatus Academicus did not see their way to accept the offer, and Dundonachie was not made Professor of Moral Philosophy, while the spiteful fates went on with the weaving of the Bridge entanglement for their coming victim. Nothing daunted by this rebuff, our metaphysician of revolution struck out again in a second and still more ambitious effort (published in 1866), entitled "The Philosophy of the Unconditioned," in which he expounded at length the "new principles" upon which all sensible metaphysicians would see that they conducted their operations in future if they hoped for any success in business at all. Here we are informed that the proposition "There is a God" "may now form the predicate of any syllogism as scientifically as that the four sides of a square are equal." One wonders how the would-be Professor could have filled up his time with such a short cut to everything he was supposed to teach. His method was simplicity itself. Every one had either to agree to the proposition "There *is* a God," or make the direct

“Dundonachie.”

negative, “There is *not* a God.” The man of “honest doubt” had

NO PLACE IN HIS SYSTEM,

so that if you, most practical of readers, should feel uncertain as to the exact amount in your purse, and can't swear either that it is 2½d or that it is not, but proceed to investigate—you, too, most unfortunate being, are likewise outside the pale of metaphysical salvation according to the Robertsonian gospel. As for the atheist, his plan was amazingly easy. “The truth that there is a God has *never been openly denied*, and until this is done it appears unnecessary to substantiate the position by any demonstration.” He ventured to challenge Gillespie as one who had tried to prove this proposition by a wrong method; but that gentleman fought shy of the proposal. He next invited that warrior of debate, Charles Bradlaugh, to a written discussion, which was promptly agreed to; but how the Dunkeld metaphysician must have rubbed his eyes when the notorious iconoclast started the ball in this brisk manner:—“*I deny the existence of a Great First Cause*”—the very thing which, according to the “new principles,” had never happened since the world began! The controversy was brevity itself. Dundonachie's reply was of such an irrelevant character that Bradlaugh's impatient retort was—“If you mean to discuss the existence of God, do so; if you mean to amuse yourself, I have not the time.” Then came

HIS GREAT ENCOUNTER

with the Rev. James Morison, D.D., founder of the Evangelical Union, and one of the foremost theologians of his day. This gentleman reviewed the “Philosophy of the Unconditioned” in the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Evangelical Repository, of which he was editor, and had the temerity to question the author's fundamental principle that "no proposition can be doubted," upon which the irate philosopher insinuated that the reviewer was thus nothing short of an infidel! Dr Morison's reply was one of the most scathing bits of literary vivisection ever performed, in the course of which he declared that "when Mr Robertson can think of anything else that can be doubted except a proposition, he will immortalise himself and really become the founder of a new era in philosophy." Dundonachie for once was brought to his knees, and confessed his discomfiture in these words:—"It may be thought by my friends that I have been worsted in this encounter, but if so I am not the first who has been beaten and has lived to fight another day!" and bowed himself off the metaphysical stage. It must be admitted that the philosopher shows great familiarity with ancient and modern writers, possesses an ample vocabulary, in which military figures of speech predominate, and has a faculty of expressing himself in a style the lucidity of which is equalled only by the innocent simplicity of the "system" it elucidates. But,

Books can't always please, however good,

and it is somewhat of a shock to one's sense of the proprieties to know that this "bright particular star" in the philosophical firmament received its final illuminative touches in the back parlour of the Black Bull Inn, Kirkgate, Perth, where the author used to proceed on Fridays from the printing office (Mr Robert Whittet's, Old Ship Close), and assisted by a well-known pressman revise the "proofs" over a mutchkin of usquebaugh!

XXXIII.

HISTORY OF THE DUNKELD BRIDGE QUESTION.

The Duke cannot deny the course of law.

—*Merchant of Venice.*

Base is the slave that pays !—*Henry V.*

One of the first questions that confronts the inquirer into this agitation is: What were Dundonachie's real motives in taking the leading part in it he did ?

The heart's aye the pairt aye
That mak's us richt or wrang ;

and although his sympathies went, naturally, with the people's cause, and most people are ready to believe the very best of him possible, it was affirmed by some at the time that he had a grudge against the Duke of Atholl ; and one of the many local versifiers which the storm and stress evoked is found declaring that—

The Chieftain deals in coals and lime,
And the Duke was a customer for a time ;
But the Chieftain's prices ranged so high
That the Duke went somewhere else to buy—
So, he would not pay the toll !

However that may be, he was identified with the business from the start, became at once its most active agent, fostered and fomented it at every stage of its development, and ultimately, like another Frankenstein, succumbed to the monster which, if not created by him, owed its continued

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

existence to his efforts. To get at the beginning of the agitation one has to

GO BACK TO 1803,

when the great Duke John (who died in January 1828) obtained an Act of Parliament empowering him to build the bridge at a cost not exceeding £18,000, which sum was to be repaid him by means of the tolls and pontages. Prior to this there were two ferries in existence—the West Ferry at Inver, above the mouth of the Braan, and the East Ferry, about a quarter of a mile below Dunkeld. The Highland road ran up the north side of the river, passing close to the Cathedral, for over three miles; and as it was alleged that the Duke entertained a “vast design” of building a Palace, at the cost of £400,000, not far from the Cathedral, it was plausibly enough argued that this could hardly have been carried out with the public road intersecting the choicest of his policies: hence the proposal to build the bridge and to divert the road round the west shoulder of Craig-y-Barns. It was even believed that the Duke would have built the bridge at his own expense rather than leave things as they were. In passing, it may be noted that the Palace was stopped on the death of Duke John and never completed, becoming simply a quarry for material for ordinary work on the estate. The bridge, however, was built, the material having been granted free by Sir George Stewart of Murthly, and, in November 1808, it was thrown open to the public—at a “bawbee” a head. As years pass the conviction grows in the public mind that the debt on the bridge is wiped out; and we hear of trouble with the Post Office authorities regarding pontages for the mails in 1853, 1861, 1862, and 1863, arising

History of the Dunkeld Bridge Question.

from the "very peculiar state in which they had discovered the bridge accounts to be." But

THE POT BOILED OVER

towards the end of 1867, when the Duke refused to receive a deputation from the Free Church with the object of getting permission for the members to pass and repass over the bridge on Sundays free. A public indignation meeting was held in November of that year, at which a Committee was appointed—Dundonachie, Convener—to inquire into the state of the bridge accounts, and a report, issued in January 1868, was the result. The principal statements made therein were that the Duke had been placed in command of upwards of £25,000, being the £18,000 borrowed under the Act and £7000 presented by the Commissioners of Highland Roads and Bridges; and, supposing all this amount to have been properly expended, there remained only £18,000 against the public to start with. Their calculations, however, led them to the conclusion that the whole debt had been paid 14 years before (*i.e.*, in 1853), including £1500 which was to be invested for maintenance; and since that date the gross revenue was

RECKONED AT £19,050,

not including the sum of £8000 said to be payable by the Highland Railway Company under agreement, and £1000 due by the Duke himself on account of unpaid tolls incurred during the construction of his Palace. The report concluded with a call for funds to try the case in the Courts of Justice. This was a pretty fair start. The Duke's agents, however—Messrs Tods, Murray, & Jamieson, Edinburgh—immediately issued a sensational counterblast.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

According to them (25th February 1868), the total expenditure on the bridge, with accesses, &c., came to £33,978 17s 1d, towards which there had been received £7027 9s 9d from the Roads Commissioners, leaving a balance of £26,951 7s 4d. The average yearly pontage up till 1856 was put down at about £900, which "*was not even sufficient to meet the interest on the amount expended,*" without touching the principal—said interest amounting to £1347 10s. Nothing was said as to the total debt; but in the House of Commons, a week before, this was reported by the Lord-Advocate to be £65,000! The members had a good laugh at the announcement. Dundonachie, determined and impatient to force a legal investigation into the bridge affairs, had already taken the law into his own hands, and fired the first shot of open revolt on the 8th February by crossing and recrossing the bridge

WITHOUT PAYMENT.

The Duke's agents wrote him on the 10th threatening "suspension and interdict," but the Chief simply winked the other eye, and, in vulgar parlance, declared he wasn't taking any. On the 13th inst. the public got in their first little joke by the destruction of the toll-gate, twelve men appearing from the Birnam side early in the morning, two of whom leapt the bar and secured the lodge-gate, thus preventing the tollkeeper doing any harm to himself, while the other ten lifted the toll-gate right off its hinges, took it to the middle of the bridge, and pitched it into the Tay. It was found among the flotsam at Caputh the same day. A new toll-gate was duly erected, and various insignificant "sniping" and "outpost affairs" went on till June, when a summons of "declarator, account, reckoning, extinction, and

History of the Dunkeld Bridge Question.

interdict" was issued at the instance of George Campbell, Meikle Lodge, Little Dunkeld, and others, pursuers, against the Duke of Atholl, defender. The pleas-in-law were—(1) That the whole expense connected with the construction of the bridge, &c., had been repaid "long ago;" (2) that one-third of the tolls at that date ceased and determined; (3) that the sum of £1500 for maintenance having accumulated since then, the right to levy tolls had ceased; (4) that the defender was bound to invest said £1500 in terms of Act of Parliament; (5) that the pursuers were entitled to have the facts ascertained; (6) that, *inter alia*, the defender was bound to debit himself in the accounts with all tolls and pontages payable by himself or his predecessors; (7) that the pursuers were entitled to interdict as concluded for, with expenses. Just to wake the Court of Session up a bit,

A PUBLIC MEETING

was held under the old oak tree at Birnam on the 16th, at which Dundonachie was in great form, the crowd proceeding thereafter to the bridge, and with saws, hammers, axes, &c., making their second attack on the toll-gate. We are informed that

The bobbies, flabbergasted,
In helpless state looked on,
The tollman, no less helpless,
Thought he had best be gone!

Result—Several arrests next day. Things beginning to look a bit too lively for Sheriff Barclay's taste, he appeared on the scene on the 24th and had a number of special constables sworn in, some of them under protest. Two days later the first public meeting on the question in Perth was held on the South Inch—the Rev. W. St Clair, St

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Stephen's Parish Church, being Chairman, and Dundonachie chief speaker. Over 4000 were present. The next act in the drama, and by far the most sensational to date, was on the 7th and 8th July. A very good "curtain-raiser" took place about nine o'clock on the 7th, when the Chief, accompanied by a large crowd, appeared at the toll-gates from the Birnam side with an axe in one hand and the Bridge Act in the other, and after reading a section from the one proceeded to smash the gates with the other.

The Chieftain called for whisky
And he drank it like a man,
He drank confusion to the Duke,
And—something—to his clan.
Then the people cheered the Chieftain,
And the Chieftain swore amain,
He swore in the Gaelic language,
And the tollman swore again ;
And the toll-gate and the gate-posts
Were very near that day
Being carried down Dundeewards
On the bosom of Father Tay.

As it was, after some dozen spars had succumbed, the head of the axe flew off, and an enterprising son of St Crispin, mounting the gate, auctioned the broken spars for 5s 6d. Next night, however, the job was finished in a thorough manner. Between 10 and 11 o'clock large crowds assembled at the gate from both sides of the river, and, after some smashing at the spars, pulled down the posts, cut up the gate with saws, axes, &c., destroyed two signboards, and otherwise enjoyed themselves, keeping up the racket till 2 A.M. Next day

THE BRIDGE WAS ENTIRELY OPEN.

A new gate was put up, however, on the following day, and the excitement intensified to an un-

History of the Dunkeld Bridge Question.

governable pitch. On Saturday night and Sunday morning, 11th and 12th, a scene of most indescribable confusion and uproar took place, and the most destructive and determined attack of all was successfully carried out, by two o'clock in the morning the gate, collector's office, signboards, palings, &c., having all gone. In the heat of the affair a special constable tried to master one of the ringleaders, and got him down. Several of the crowd got on the top of the "special." Three policemen then went for the rescuers, and a regular mob went for the poor policemen, who had a hot time of it. As another of the poets exclaims ecstatically—

Oh, what a night as ever was seen,
Wi' specials, an' bobbies, an' fowk wi' blue een !

Variety was introduced into the pontage entertainment by the unexpected appearance, two days later, of a detachment of the 42d from Perth. This fairly put the people mad. On the 14th Dunkeld and Birnam turned out *en masse*, and, headed by a piper and a brass band, and with hostile demonstrations all along the route, crossed and recrossed the bridge in the presence of the military without adding a copper to the funds. Fortunately there was no interference offered. Meantime Dundonachie began to

HAVE HIS HANDS FULL

of cases in the various Courts, and was fined, bound over to keep the peace, &c., over and over again, with no apparent effect. Public meetings were held throughout the country, at which the Chief usually appeared. One was held in Dundee on the 24th November 1868, with Gilfillan and he as principal speakers. The second and greatest meeting ever held in Perth took

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

place on the North Inch on the 14th August 1869, when some 7000 were present. The Chairman was "Ned" Webb, a good-natured English printer in the office of Mr Robert Whittet. His introduction of the "indomicable Dundonnochie" was immense. The Chief himself was in fine fettle, and finished his oration with a couple of stanzas of "Scots Wha Hae!" The 6th September marks a sensational event in the blowing up of the romantic "Hermitage" on the Braan. Inquiry never traced the depredator. Sir Robert Menzies kicking the "Bridge Fund" collection box to pieces on the public road is one of the touches of comedy deserving of passing notice. Then, at last, we have the results of two years' struggle on the 17th December 1869 in the

COURT OF SESSION DECISION.

The Duke's claim at 31st December 1867 was reduced from £55,000 to £31,000, this latter sum being brought out on the footing of charging only simple interest, and on the assumption (1) that the Duke had spent the £18,000 on the bridge, &c. ; and (2) that the proceeds of the pontage were correctly set forth in the accounts. As might be expected, there were tremendous jubilations at Dunkeld, Birnam, Perth, Dundee, and elsewhere at this substantial victory. The next triumph came at the end of March 1870, when the Court's Accountant brought down the debt as at Dec. 31, 1867, to £16,000 ; but Dundonachie was not satisfied even then, maintaining that the debt was not more than £6000. The case, accordingly, went to the Inner House, with the result that, on the 23d December 1871, the final judgment on this famous case was given, by which the total debt, as at 31st December 1867, was made out to be £18,116 5s 8d.

History of the Dunkeld Bridge Question.

There the matter stopped, neither party carrying to the House of Lords. As for Dundonachie, the case branched out to such an extent that he appeared to have actions running

IN NEARLY ALL THE COURTS

at the same time. Wherever possible he was his own counsel, and displayed a knowledge of law and a forensic ability quite remarkable. But the agitation ruined him in purse and person, however much it resulted to the good of the public; and he lacked self-control—slandering Sheriff Barclay, assaulting Lord-President Inglis—for both of which offences he suffered terms of imprisonment—and even quarrelling with his best friends latterly. It should ever be remembered to his credit, however, that the Roads and Bridges Act of 1878 was the direct outcome of the agitation, a Bill proposing the abolition of tolls having been twice introduced as early as 1869. When the agitation died down the Chief left the district for London, where he lived a bohemian sort of life during the day, and at night used to

Compound for sins he was inclined to
By damning those he had no mind to

in the form of wordy discussions on the existence of a Great First Cause with his old opponents, Charles Bradlaugh, George Jacob Holyoake, *et hoc genus*, at the “Hall of Science.” Some time about 1881 he

WENT TO AMERICA,

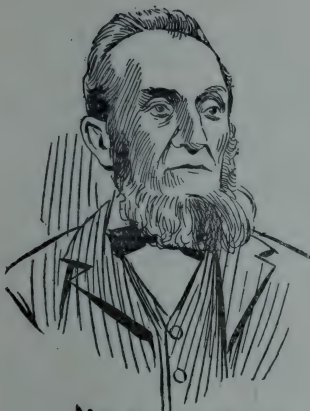
where he delivered lectures in the States and Canada on Scottish song, life, and character, which were eminently successful. Then he returned to Edinburgh, where he used to be seen about his old haunts of the great Court of Session

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

days, managing to keep things going by means of his pen. Finally he removed to Glasgow, where he finished his checkered course in the Western Infirmary on the 24th October 1893, aged 68. Now within the sacred precincts of the Cathedral at Dunkeld, hardly a stone's throw from the scene of so many of his battles,

After life's fitful fever
He sleeps well.

ALEXANDER CRICHTON,
COLLACE,



MR A. CRICHTON.

INVENTOR AND
LITTERATEUR.

XXXIV.

ALEXANDER CRICHTON, COLLACE.

So much one man can do
That does both act and know.

—ANDREW MARVEL.

The Crichtons are said to have been Hungarians originally, coming from Hungary with the daughter of the fugitive Prince of England, who afterwards became Queen Margaret of Scotland. The branch from which our friend has sprung came from Sanquhar to Ruthven, in 1375, and were proprietors of the latter parish about 1745. Both Thomas the laird and John, his brother, were out in the '45, and served as lieutenants at Culloden, fleeing the country after that disastrous event. According to traditions, Thomas borrowed a thousand pounds shortly before his departure from a Dundee merchant called Ogilvy, who had himself proclaimed laird of Ruthven at the Cross of Edinburgh afterwards; another version is that the estate was sold to Thomas Ogilvy of Coul in 1744; in any case, it passed into the Ogilvy family, and has remained there ever since. An extremely interesting and probably

UNIQUE MEMENTO

of Culloden and Mr Crichton's Jacobite ancestors is in his possession. This is a proclamation dated 22d August from the camp at Kinlocheil, by Prince Charlie, offering £30,000 for the "Person

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

of the Elector of Hanover." The document is written on paper having the Royal watermark, and is signed "Charles, P.R." Mr Crichton's maternal grandfather was Duncan Macfarlane, of the Moulin branch, who are descended from the Stuarts of Lennox. He was cousin to Daniel Stewart, who erected and endowed Strathtay School, and whose money built Stewart's Hospital, Edinburgh. The paternal grandfather, again, Alexander Crichton, was a self-taught mason and sculptor at Kirkinch, well known over a wide district for his artistic sundials, carved armorial bearings, figures of Scottish heroes, &c., and as a man of strong individuality and sound acquirements. His son Peter (father of our friend) was born at Kirkinch, and bred to the miller business, residing at various periods at Cardean, Keithock, Lewer, Invereighy, Nether Mill, Millhole, Milton (Glen of Ogilvy), and Clockbriggs. On the mother's side, again, it is worth noting that her oldest sister was the mother of the late Engineer-in-Chief of the British Navy—namely, Sir James Wright, who in his time remodelled the whole fleet, and had the honour of Knighthood conferred upon him by the late Queen in 1887. It was at Lewer, in the

PARISH OF FORFAR,

that the subject of our sketch first saw light, and Newtyle claims him as her scholar in his early years. His natural bent was soon exhibited in the production of water-mills, locomotives, &c., even at that time. Doubtless the close proximity to the Dundee and Newtyle railway helped somewhat in the latter direction, and he was never tired examining the machinery of both the locomotive and stationary engines. "Puffin

Alexander Crichton, Collace.

Shusie" was the elegant appellation applied to the locomotive that used to run between Newtyle, Coupar Angus, and Meigle Junction. "Shusie" would not be regarded as a beauty nowadays, and was decidedly *passée* when our young and eager inventor first became acquainted with her, requiring much nursing to keep her running. Her driver, a reckless, hard-hearted Englishman, used to abuse her quite shamefully; for when he got on the spree, which not infrequently happened, he would amuse himself by pelting his old sweetheart with stones—which was nothing to the "langwidge" he used. One day, however, she had a sweet revenge. Fiskien—the name of her driver—was oiling the cylinder as they were passing through the wood of Newbigging, when she caught him by the foot and pitched him right overboard and down a steep embankment. She got it 'ot for that, though. Old "Shusie's" water supply had to be pumped up by hand from a well in the village, which was great fun for the boys, who had their pay in a two miles' run on the engine. Mechanics seem to have run

IN THE CRICHTON BLOOD,

for our friend had a granduncle and a number of cousins connected with the Newtyle Railway, and all more or less affected that way. One of his cousins, David Crichton, was a great fellow for working models of steam engines, one of which, made of silver, was well known in Dundee. A beautiful lathe, constructed by him, was sold to a Broughty Ferry gentleman for £45. It was this David who ran the "Caley" engine to Glasgow in the race between the rival lines at the opening of the Tay Bridge, arriving three quarters of an hour before his opponent. Another cousin was the maker of the game little model locomotive dubbed

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

"Cutty Sark," which still holds its own at Dundee Exhibitions. At Clocksbriggs the miller's son was sent to the plough, but his heart was never in the work, only, as he trudged the "furs" behind his pair, he was enabled to think out many a problem in mechanics, which for lack of books he had to test by practical experiment afterwards, and too often learned, to his chagrin, that there were other Richmonds in the field. A case of this sort was his "link motion" contrivance, which, later on, he stumbled across at work in one of the ferry boats between Dundee and Newport. But the young man of 16 or 18 was steadily making a name for himself in the district, and

A GREAT TRIUMPH

was his when he managed to make to work properly an old "Watt & Boulton" engine—the first of the kind north of the Tay—at Muirton Mill, near Clocksbriggs, which had beaten all the engineers in Arbroath. About this time, too, he began learning the violin, and recalls as among the things he would not willingly forget the grand playing of Jamie Allan, of Forfar, and his string band, which the young fiddler used to tramp to Forfar to hear. But he was not satisfied with the prospect of turning out a Niel Gow or even a Paganini, and with characteristic restlessness was always

Seeking for some great thing to do
Or secret thing to know.

He must have a shy at the Stradivari business as well, several well-made fiddles being the result. That was only a beginning, however. His next idea was a fiddle-making machine, which automatically carved the backs and bellies of any pattern, following the delicate curves and thicknesses with the greatest nicety. That was 35 years ago;

Alexander Crichton, Collace.

what a chance there is here for Scottish thrift and industry! Why should Markneukirchen and Mirecourt fiddles be imported by the hundred thousand every year when we can make better instruments for ourselves? But the young inventor did not stop even there, for he

STARTED EXPERIMENTING

on the shape of the violin itself, and has made a number of the "bell" pattern—an idea of his own—which certainly sound as well as many more expensive instruments of the ordinary shape. Photography next claimed him as a votary, and it was only natural that he should begin by making a camera for himself, the lenses for which were the glasses from an old pair of spectacles! Good old camera! Its work was truly wonderful. In 1868 he removed to Kinlochtry, and while there had occasion to thank his stars that he lost a certain train, seeing that it ran into a siding at Auchterhouse, thereby injuring some 40 passengers. About the same time a double collision took place at Alyth Junction. These accidents set our friend athinking, with the result that he invented his "audible signal" contrivance, the chief feature of which was a trigger arrangement which turned on a whistle should any of the signals be passed unawares, and an apparatus which recorded every instance of a driver passing any visible signals without blowing his whistle. The invention was offered to the North British Railway, but the reply was that a (visible) warning signal had already been tried but went to pieces. This suggested his breakable baton device, which, if ever adopted, Mr Crichton thinks can hardly be improved upon. Next we have his great

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

STRING-BINDING ARRANGEMENT

for reapers. In 1876 an American wire-binder was at work at Inchtute, after an examination of which our inventor came to the conclusion that wire "would not do," and set about, as usual, thinking out something better—with string. He got little encouragement from those he talked to about the matter; but the respect in which his opinions were held—as well as people's shortsightedness—may be gauged from the fact that an offer to show how it could be done for £50 was not accepted, and he determined to make a model for himself. Want of proper appliances prevented the completion of this before 1878, when he sent it to Hornsby & Sons, the well-known agricultural implement makers, only to be told, after considerable delay, that they could not take the invention up, as they were engaged on a wire-binder. After immense trouble and worry with this and that individual a reaper and binder of his own design was tried on a field at Denhead, near Coupar Angus, in 1885; but it was not till the following harvest, on a field at Kinnochtry, that

COMPLETE AND TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS

rewarded his labours. It does not excite surprise, however, to find that by this time string binders were at work elsewhere—regarding which fact our inventor has his own ideas. Another clever contrivance is the fishing-rod cutter, by which he can turn out the six tapered sections of a cane rod in twenty minutes—equal to the work of a man for a week by the ordinary methods! Some 18 years ago, when gas-engines were so popular, he experimented with benzine and paraffin as motors with perfect success, and thought out a magnet "exploder" of his own—the one he made

Alexander Crichton, Collace.

sustaining a weight of 20 lbs. A telephone, a microphone, a magnetic battery, &c., were the by-products of his spare time. In 1889 he came to his present domicile at Milton of Collace, and we find him in 1893 under the spell of electricity. Having constructed a dynamo, fitted up the driving machinery, &c., he had the mill and house lit up with incandescent lights before the year was out. It caused no little sensation in the district, and no end of questions: Was it dangerous? Did he take it out of the water? Did he get it in tins? And, worst of all—What is't a'va'? Even the very tinkers had to be satisfied. Three years later he constructed a larger dynamo, and with its aid had 12 lights running for a couple of nights at a bazaar in connection with the Burrelton Hall Fund—a genuine novelty for such a small country place. But

The world knows nothing of its greatest men,

and it is just in such places they are bred to perfection. The same dynamo lights up the mill and house at the present time, and is as good as when fitted up

SIX YEARS AGO.

The water is turned on, and the beautiful straw-tinged lights, as perfect and as brilliant as may be seen in any jeweller's window in Dundee or Edinburgh, suddenly blossom forth like some wonderful kind of flower from Aladdin's garden—in strange contrast with their surroundings. Then the *genius loci* has so arranged matters that by simply switching out the lights the water is in turn run off the wheel, and the whole mechanism stopped. But even this is only part of a larger scheme of the inventor's own, by which the water-power installation may be started or

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

stopped automatically by means of an ordinary clock at any given hour after sunset all the year round, so that the lights in such a village as Burrelton—or in the largest city in the world, for that matter—can be made to appear as regularly as darkness sets in, as quietly and unobtrusively as old sweet-faced Luna herself! But we must call a halt; in one word, there are few trades our friend has not had a shy at, and in which he has not turned out excellent work. In addition to all this, there is

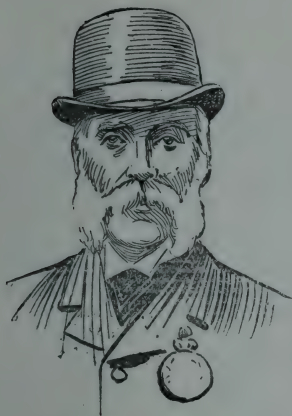
THE LITERARY SIDE

of our ingenious miller, which can only be briefly touched upon here. He has been 24 years one of the leading members of the Burrelton Literary Society—18 years as Treasurer, and some time Chairman—and both by voice and pen has enhanced the reputation and prosperity of that thoroughly live institution. Then there is his notable contribution to the Burns *versus* Lady Nairne controversy in respect to the authorship of the “Land o’ the Leal,” which appeared in a Glasgow newspaper some years ago, and in which he certainly makes out a very good case for the national bard. Finally, it is hardly necessary to say he is as great a student now as ever he was. His one great absorbing passion is to discover as much as may be permitted him of the great mysteries of the material universe around him; and, blessed as he is, under the shadow of classic Dunsinane, with

Content, retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease, and alternate labour,

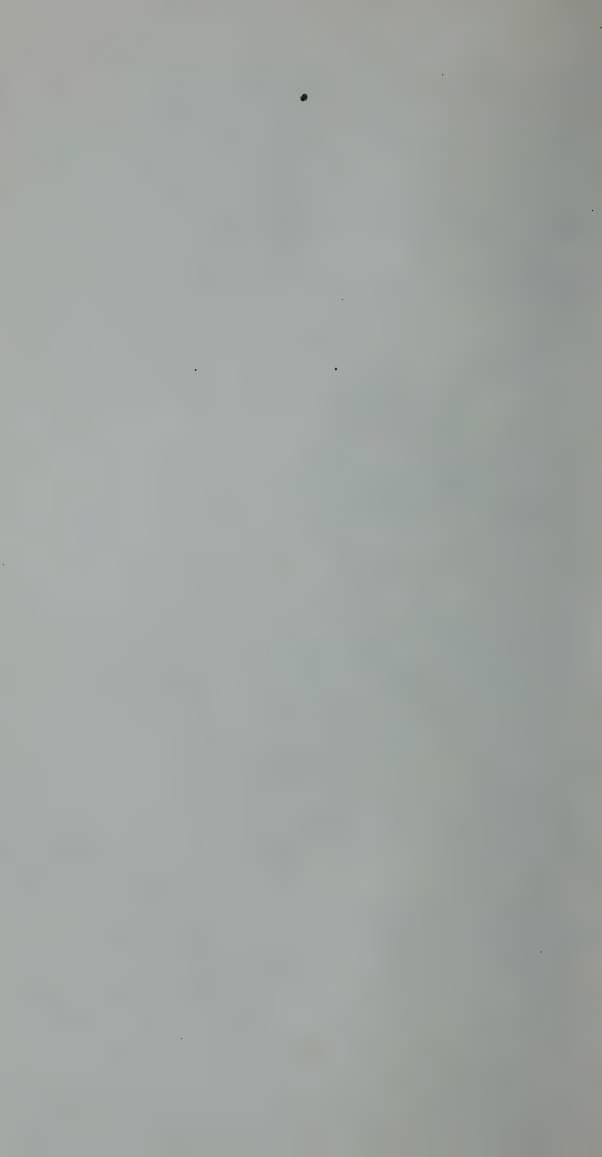
it will be strange if our Admirable Crichton of Collace does not yet eclipse his own brilliant record.

**JOHN FARQUHARSON,
GLENFERNATE,**



JOHN FARQUHARSON.

SPORTSMAN POACHER.



XXXV.

JOHN FARQUHARSON,

GLENFERNATE.

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.—WORDSWORTH.

No incident in the career of this remarkable man, whose irrestrainable love of sport and adventure led him to renounce the comfortable commonplaces of life, and adopt a course which was at war with every convention regarding property in *feræ naturæ*, is more extraordinary than his discovery of the long-lost cave of Lonavey on Cairn Righ. The story has been told already by Mr M'Combie Smith in his fascinating "Romance of Poaching," but is sufficiently strange to bear repetition many times. Lonavey was the name given Jain M'Kerracher or M'Farquhar, a noted deer poacher of the Mar and Athole forests about the middle of the 17th century. When pursued by the foresters it was observed that he usually made for a certain spot where he disappeared among the rocks as completely as though he had sunk into the earth, and all attempts to discover his hiding-place proved vain. On one occasion, foreseeing his own capture and imprisonment, he deposited his gun and dirk on a shelf in his cave, in hope of finding them there when he should be released. That never happened, however, as he

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

died in captivity. Search thereafter was made in every likely direction for

LONAVEY'S SECRET CAVE,

but all to no purpose. Year after year, generation after generation kept up the tradition of the cave and its contents, but that was all. Then arose our great deer-hunter of Glenfergatie, John Farquharson—in skill, tastes, and even name a true lineal descendant of the great John Farquharson (for that is the signification of Jain M'Kerracher or M'Farquhar) of long ago; and as he grew up he dreamt of emulating the deeds of his predecessor, and perhaps of even discovering his old hiding-place. He was no more successful in the latter respect than those before him. One memorable day about 1875, however, while crouching behind several large boulders to evade three gamekeepers who were after him, he observed an opening low down beneath an overhanging ledge of rock, into which he managed to crawl; and found to his surprise he could stand upright inside. His pursuers came up, were completely baffled, and went off with imprecations both loud and deep, one of the party declaring that the earth seemed to have opened and swallowed up their quarry. Farquharson heard, and was struck by the remark—practically the same which used to be made when Lonavey would disappear so mysteriously. He lit a match, and experienced a thrill on finding he was in a large cave measuring about 12 feet by 14 feet. Lonavey's, beyond doubt! Down in the dark he sat once more to think the matter out. What about the gun and dirk? Was it possible —! With trembling hands he struck another light, and there on a shelf of rock were lying the identical

John Farquharson, Glenfernate.

weapons which the resigned and sad-hearted John Farquharson of former days had deposited two centuries and a half ago, never to be seen or disturbed till that moment, when another John Farquharson was to be the finder. Had all this taken place in India, metempsychosis, reincarnation, would have been the only explanation.

OUR JOHN FARQUHARSON,

anyhow, is not to be regarded as a "poacher" in any ordinary sense of the word. He certainly broke the laws of the land with respect to game, but was as much above an ordinary mouching, slouching poacher as a naval officer is above a pirate. Pure love of sport with a dash of danger in it was the ruling inducement with him to take up the line of life he did, and reject many "tempting" offers made him of positions of trust and profit. Apart from his feats as an illicit sportsman, he displayed mental qualities much above the average. He had received a good ordinary education, was a fervid lover and accurate observer of nature, both animate and inanimate, and could write graphically about things. As a marksman he held the premier position in 1868, when he carried off the international trophy at Brussels—winning the Duke of Cambridge's prize at Wimbledon for rapid and accurate shooting the same year. He also invented an ingenious cartridge-extractor, which he offered to our Government, but after a wearying delay it was rejected in favour of another which turned out not so good. There was a lawsuit between Farquharson and Henry over the Farquharson-Martini rifle, our friend winning his case. In habits he was very abstemious, preferring tea or coffee to

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

work upon; he had usually a little assortment of cooking utensils and provisions secreted in Lonavey's Cave for emergencies. He never smoked; morally he was straight and honourable in every transaction, and a detester of all meanness. Here are a few stories of his exploits. On one occasion, being foolishly nettled by some sarcastic remark of an American he had accompanying him, in a spirit of bravado, he shot seven deer within a minute, firing nine times—the last shot at a hind on a ridge of a hill over 350 yards away. He confessed himself heartily ashamed of such "butchery," and forswore it thenceforth. A companion, Mac, and he shot a deer, and hid the carcass among the heather, intending to return for it in a night or two. They suspected a watch might be put upon it, and on the fourth night thereafter approached the spot very cautiously. Their caution was rewarded with the smell of peat reek issuing from a rude shepherd's hut in the vicinity, and Mac was sent forward to reconnoitre. He reported that the hut was occupied by gamekeepers, and suggested setting fire to it and

MAKING OFF WITH THE STAG

while the watchers were trying to put out the blaze. Agreed. When Farquharson had an inspection down the open smoke-hole in the roof, however, he discovered a burglar's alarm sort of arrangement inside the hut, a string having been attached to a swinging chain near the fireplace, stretched across the room, and passed beneath the door—the other end being discovered fastened to a leg of the stag, so that it could not be shifted without the "gameys'" knowledge. So they imagined; but Farquharson

John Farquharson, Glenfergiate.

stuck his walking staff firmly in the ground, and adroitly cut the string, keeping the tension unaltered till he had the string fastened round the stick. The rest may be imagined. The two heavily-laden chums met a man coming up the hill with refreshments for the ingenious watchers, and he gave the alarm, but it was too late, as a pony had been provided for carrying off the spoil. There was some amusement with his American friend already referred to. They had had a grand day, shot as many deer as they wanted, and gralloched and hid the carcasses. Camping ground was fixed, where they dined, supped, and slept, awaking early with the intention of climbing the Glas Mhaol, the highest hill in Forfarshire, in order that the American might have the benefit of the magnificent view it commands. The morning was misty, however, and the project was abandoned. "Let's have a haggis," said Farquharson. "Where's the pot?" "Oh, we'll soon manage that." So, taking the bag of one of the hinds, it was washed in a neighbouring burn, turned outside in, filled with chopped tongue, heart, and kidneys, together with a modicum of water, tied up, and suspended on a stick over a fire, and the "pot" was started to its duty. It began to swell, and nearly exploded, but a stab let the steam out and two or three onions in. Rare scent to a couple of hungry poachers on the Grampians! Things were getting along famously, when suddenly a dog put in an appearance and began sniffing all around in a thoroughly appreciative if not appreciated manner. He was followed by his master, who, to the relief of

OUR TWO ADVENTURERS

turned out to be neither a gamekeeper nor a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

sportsman. The haggis was a great success. When poaching at night, Farquharson used to put phosphorus on the top of his dog's head and at the root of its tail, so as to enable him to judge exactly the direction in which the birds were. He was continually tricking the gamekeepers. On one occasion he saw two of them stalking him. They took off their shoes at the side of a burn, and came up the hillside where he had been noticed. Farquharson, however, dipped down into a hollow, slipped round a corner, doubled, and carried off the gameys' shoes before they got to the top, only to find their bird flown. A friend and he were shooting on the Glenshee hills one day, and had big bags. They were to cross the Shee to the south side when they espied two watchers approaching on the opposite bank. Giving his bag and gun to his companion, he was instructed to go down the water, keeping close to the riverside. Then Farquharson, standing in full view of the keepers, signalled as if to his companion to follow him up the water. The observers went up the water too. Watching his chance, while passing behind some trees, Farquharson turned his jacket and cap outside in (they were reversible), changing them from grey to blue, and when the enemy came up, ready to pounce upon two poachers with guns and bags, they discovered only an intelligent countryman sitting at the root of a tree absorbed in his newspaper.

HE WAS AN ADEPT AT DISGUISES,

and usually carried several handkerchiefs of different colours, by means of which he made very effective transformations on his own appearance or that of his dog or horse when occasion arose. The reference to disguises recalls

John Farquharson, Glenfernate.

one of Farquharson's most picturesque feats when he and an Edinburgh publican, very anxious to have a real "Twelfth" with the intrepid trespasser, shot over a couple of moors in first-class style as wealthy sportsmen, an ostler named George having been rigged out as gamekeeper, and a brace of splendid Irish setters completing the outfit. The agreement was that the publican was to pay all expenses and any fines which happened to crop up, and in return get all the birds they would bag. They were on the move by three o'clock on a certain Twelfth. About mid-day a gamekeeper with two dogs was seen approaching them, while a little way off a party at lunch were observed. Business looked bad, but Farquharson, who never lost his head on any occasion, kept his eye on the man, and before the latter could speak, shouted out to him in a sharp tone—"Hallo, there! Why don't you keep your dogs in at your heel when crossing any one's ground, especially when it is not shot over?"

THE MAN TOUCHED HIS CAP,

apologised, but explained that Lord A—— had sent him to mention that they were probably a hundred yards over the march and on Lord A——'s ground. "Tell Lord A——," said Farquharson, "that we are very sorry to have trespassed, but the boundary line is so ill-defined. We trust we may be excused." The gamekeeper touched his cap once more, and was moving off, when the Edinburgh chiel gave him a dram for his trouble, and everybody was pleased all round. Thirty brace was the total for the day, and when the publican returned home with his spoil and dilated over the details

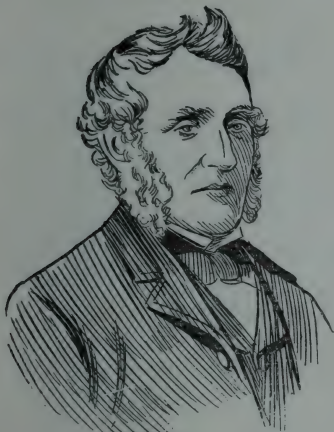
Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

in this red-letter day in his life, nothing excited so much amusement in his auditors as his description of the vice-versa business between the haughty poacher and the subservient gamey.

One of the cleverest of his escapes was after a good day's sport, in company with two noted poachers, up one of the glens. When they reached the spot where the trap was to meet them for the spoil, the driver informed them that policemen and keepers were on the road, and that he and his horse and trap had been both suspected and closely scrutinised on the way up. There was dismay in the camp, but after some deliberation their plans were laid. Farquharson tied one of his handy white handkerchiefs over the horse's face; the driver produced two lamps from the bottom of his dogcart; and three white hats, which the driver's wife had had the forethought to send, took the place of their dark caps, and thus effected a pretty fair transformation in their appearance. Into the vehicle they jumped, started off disputing with each other, then singing and laughing in chorus, and otherwise doing the uproariously tipsy business—so different from what might be expected from three cautious poachers returning with their booty—in the most approved fashion. When they reached the spot where the watchers were stationed our conspirators were bawling—"He's a jolly, good fellow" at the top of their voice, and had even the cheek to cry out to the gaping policemen—"Can you? can you? can you?" as they flew past.

Farquharson gave up all this in 1891, married, and went to stay at West Ferry. He died in March 1893, over sixty years of age—the last of his race, it is probable—it is feared!

**WILLIAM MACLAREN,
PITTENDREICH :**



MR W. McLAREN.

**VETERAN
AGRICULTURIST.**

XXXVI.

WILLIAM MACLAREN, PITTENDREICH.

Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense,
Lie in three words—health, peace, and competence.—POPE.

“Pittendreich” is a name fairly familiar to readers of “Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.” To many it is nothing more than a name. After reading the article on “Ian Maclaren,” however, it is hardly necessary to say that it stands for an individual and a farm, both of which are held in special remembrance by the teller of tales. Pittendreich the farm is on the Lethendy estate, fully three miles to the south-west of Blairgowrie, and extends to some 200 acres, which lie beautifully to the sun on the northern slopes of the Lower Stormont—just about where, according to some historians, Galgacus drew up the Caledonians to face the invading Romans under Agricola over 1800 years ago. Gothens, Cranley, and the historic Tower of Lethendy are near neighbours, and the broken horizon to the west is closed in by the purple hills about Birnam and Dunkeld; to the east are the Sidlaws, with glimpses of the Ochils and the Lomonds; and to the south lie the Haughs of Delvine and the woods of Murthly, with the fair expanse of the Lower Stormont, through which the lordly Tay wanders in leisurely fashion from Dunkeld to Perth, stretching east and west in the vale below. From this sunlit braeface the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

Maclarens, father and son, have looked out upon the strath for

OVER A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS,

and the present tenant of Pittendreich is the oldest farmer, active and alert, not only in the Stormont, but over a much wider area. He was born on the farm in 1820, and is thus in his 83d year. His father, John Maclaren, wrought there before he married, came to be tenant of the place, and died on it at the advanced age of 92 years, a new lease having been made out in his son William's name a few years before his demise. There were four sons and four daughters in the family, nearly every one of whom has been connected with farming. David had a lease of Mill of Inverarity and Kinpurnie farms; John farmed Leckaway, south of Forfar, and is now retired in Rattray; Thomas had Seggieden, Grange of Kincaldrum, and Pert; and William is at Pittendreich. Two of the daughters married farmers. Of education very little was going in our old friend's young days, but what there was he got. There was a school on the estate, but the teacher had such a poor grip upon his scholars that the house was ultimately used for threshing corn in. Better results were obtained from Meikleour School, but, the fact is, he was required on the fields at an early age, and when quite a boy had his own "pair" in hand. He has very vivid recollections of the long hours, the hard work, and the backward methods of his youth.

IN THOSE DAYS

nearly all the grain and potatoes were driven to Perth three times a week, for which they had to start off as early as two or three in the morning, with a "bowl o' brose" for breakfast. The

William Maclaren, Pittendreich.

potatoes were mostly put on board ships at the Friarton, where the vessels would be lying three-deep at times. The carts usually returned laden with dung; there were no "artificials" then. Hours were just as many as the farmer could get out of his hands; wages ran, for halflin, £8 to £10; best man, £12. They are more than three times that now, best men getting as high as £40. Pittendreich recalls the "rinderpest" days with great zest, although he suffered considerable loss by the plague. Breeders and cattle-raisers generally lost heavily, and something like panic seized upon certain districts, every one trying to get rid of his stock before it should be condemned. On one occasion Pittendreich sent on a consignment to Edinburgh, and went to Glasgow with another himself. When he arrived at the mart he was met by his own beasts from Edinburgh, where they had failed to find a purchaser. Prices that day went "plunk" to zero. The late Mr Spalding, Balconnel, who had Pondfauld then, lost 51 out of 52 cattle. Pittendreich tried pig-feeding as an experiment, but they were not a success. In his early days there were some nine or ten little pendicles on the farm, and every tenant was connected with the flax-growing and weaving business. This was

AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRY,

details of which are interesting, and the methods employed, in some respects at any rate, hardly capable of improvement. Amongst these may be mentioned the admirable arrangement by which it was possible for the farmers to have at hand whenever required bands of experienced workers, male and female, who, as soon as "hairst" and "tatty-liftin'" were over and winter fairly set in again, resumed their indoor employment, and

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

thus kept the year merry all through with healthy and varied endeavour, satisfactory alike to both employer and employed. Masons and other outdoor workers were usually weavers also, and filled in the winter nights profitably at their looms. Hand-weaving can hardly be expected to take the position again it once held in country life, but with cheap electric power—the generator for which runs unheeded past our very doors—it is regrettable that efforts are not made to encourage other arts and industries—in wood, in iron, in textiles, &c.—during the winter months. But, dealing with the flax business: First of all, the seed was sown broadcast in the spring, and as the plant was very exhausting to the soil, the amount of land allowed under cultivation was strictly limited in the lease. The crop was generally a little earlier than the others, and as soon as it was ready the parish minister stepped in and claimed his “tenth,” which he pulled for himself. In passing, it may be mentioned that he was entitled to every tenth lamb also, but apparently both these privileges existed in Lethendy parish only. There is

A GOOD STORY

regarding the farmer of Spoutwell, who arranged that all his lambs should be dropped on Scroggiehill, which, while on the same estate, was in another parish. Down came the minister (Mr Rae) upon him when he discovered the fine promising lot of lambs at Spoutwell; but the wily farmer “kent the law” too well, and had very good sport at the minister’s expense. Every cottage had its one or more wheels; in Pittendreich there were three, and their whirr was pleasant music of an evening when everybody had gathered “in aboot.” Every woman and girl

William Maclaren, Pittendreich.

was "stented" (fixed down) to a certain quantity a day as minimum. The spun flax was taken to weavers in the district and sold right out. By these it was woven for the most part into white cloth for sheeting, &c; some of the coarser linen was made into sacking. The sacks, it may be mentioned, were all 6 bushels in those days; they are all 4 bushels now. The father of the late John Liston, Hallhole, was the first to introduce the novelty. In America they are usually 2 bushels. The Maclarens have always been noted for their splendid farming. Pittendreich is not able to trace any relationship between his father and the other John Maclaren of Drumlochry (grandfather of "Ian Maclaren"), although they were great friends; but Drumlochry showed the energy, thrift, and enterprise he was capable of when he settled down on the edge of the

MUIR OF GORMACK

and engaged to turn it to more profitable work than the mere growing of whin and heather. It is generally understood that the proprietor gave him as much as he took in from the muir for nothing for a number of years, and after that at nominal rent. Our old friend has the same grit in him. When he got the farm all the roads were a "general wade," the fields all shapes and sizes, with trees scattered all over the place. He accordingly set to and formed the roads, trenched and drained the ground, squared the fields—throwing two or three into one—fenced them, increased the acreage from 150 to 200, and otherwise brought the farm up to the model condition it now boasts. The late John Panton, known all over the East of Scotland as a model farmer, always professed himself a great admirer of Pittendreich's methods, and, as men-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

tioned in a former article, the standing order to his grieve at Gothens, which adjoins, was to "keep up with Pittendreich." He has seen the "teeth heuk," the "smooth heuk," the scythe, the reaper, and the binder supplant each other in turn. He remembers how, when bone-dust—the first "artificial"—was introduced some 68 years ago, an old wife declared she would never eat another turnip after she saw the stuff used. Guano came next, but we have no record of what the old wife said then. The farm was one of the very first on which the innovations were put on trial.

THE FIRST SWEDISH TURNIP

Pittendreich ever saw was on the land of one Duncan, at Cargill, the date being about the same as for the introduction of the new manures. Pittendreich is not a breeder of cattle, but a crop-raiser and feeder. In the former capacity more particularly he is a leading member of the Strathmont and Strathmore Agricultural Society. In 1890 he took prizes for the heaviest crop of turnips and best work all over, which was a record. He always carries off a prize for his turnips. As regards feeding, the farm is splendidly adapted for the purpose, and the matter of 200 head of heavy cattle are the average output for the year. Our esteemed friend is a great believer in the unobtrusive ways of sweet "health and quiet breathing," which are the ways of nature herself. Beyond his farm and its affairs, the kirk (Lethendy U.F., of which he is a substantial "pillar"), and a keen interest in politics (he is a staunch Liberal) he has no particular concern. Nine years ago the county honoured itself by making him a J.P.

XXXVII.

THE DEIL O' GLENISLA.

Rab, ye're an honest rogue!

—Bailie NICOLL JARVIE.

This extraordinary character, the "Deil o' Genisla," has been likened to Rob Roy in at least one particular—his habit of confining his unwelcome attentions practically to the best paying class of customers and letting his poorer brethren alone; even sharing his spoils with some of them at times. Hence the equanimity with which his irregular methods were regarded generally. It was only a very small section of the community that suffered, and they might go hang while the majority enjoyed the sport. The victims themselves were frequently forced to grin and bear it rather than raise a din about things which would have put them in a more ridiculous light. But we miss the glory and romance of the bold Maogregor: no gory dirks or swingeing broadswords or mortal combats or feats of prowess on generous dramatic lines figure in the history of the Deil, and if there was blood upon his head—or his hands—nothing more serious than sticking a stolen sheep or thraving the necks of some old wives' fowls was likely to be the cause. All the same, his life and environment are sufficiently strange to

EXCITE ASTONISHMENT

that such things could be. His real name was James Ramsay, and his birthplace Dundee,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

where he first saw light in 1777. He was variously known as Ramsay, "Bamff," "the Deil o' Glenisla," and "the King o' Lintrathen." "Bamff" was his own preference, as that implied some recognition of his claim to be connected with the Ramsays of Bamff. It was never ascertained, however, that the family were particularly anxious to have the relationship established. When he left Dundee is not known, but he begins to be heard of in the Alyth and Glenisla districts about the beginning of last century, and for a period of over 40 years we know of his cantrips. For a long while he occupied a house at the corner of a field about three hundred yards to the east of the present inn at the Kirkton of Glenisla. The floor of the cottage was only a little above the level of Melgum Water, close by. One night, when a sudden spate came down, the Deil awoke to find everything under water that could not float, with the cat sailing about on the top of the bellows. He was supposed to work a bit of land and "troke" away with agricultural produce by means of a horse and cart; but the fact probably is that he found it much more profitable to ignore squeamish distinctions as to *meum* and *tuum* than bother about the price of stock or grain, and relied much more upon his wits than the sweat of his brow. Nobody seemed particularly anxious to know how he lived, and his horse was chiefly supported by "grab." One of the earliest stories about him is

A SMUGGLING ONE.

He was coming along the road towards Alyth one day with two ankers of stuff concealed in the bottom of a cart, when he espied two gaugers approaching. Before he had caught their eye he turned off into a steading which happened to be

The Deil o' Glenisla.

close by, buried his kegs in the pigs' reed, and got back to the road before the officials came up. They made an inspection of his cart, with a joke, but, seeing nothing, passed on. By and bye, when he considered it safe, he returned to the steading, lifted his malodorous kegs, and, seeing no one at hand, could not resist the temptation to carry off three or four fowls that persisted in getting in his way. These were missed next day, and the guilty party suspected, but no trace of them could be discovered, and when accused he had the presence of mind to refer the farmer to the gaugers, who testified there was nothing in his cart when they searched it. He was never without a smuggled "drap" in his house, and at night, especially in winter, many a rough scene was witnessed there. One night the company was particularly hilarious, and the Deil, in the best of moods, prepared supper. A farmer present had lost a sheep shortly before, and his host showed great anxiety that he should not spare the mutton, "For," said he, "that's a' ye're likely to see o' your wether!" On one occasion he made off with a score of sheep, drove them to Dundee, and disposed of them before they were missed. He appropriated a cow on another occasion, and had her sold at Alyth market before the irate owner put in an appearance. The Deil simply snapped his fingers in reply to the swearing he got.

HE WAS CAUGHT

helping himself from the corn bing at the farm of Foldend, Lintrathen, one day by Mr Fenton, the farmer. "What are you daein' there, Ramsay?" asked he sharply. "Oh, juist takin' a pickle cauff, sir; juist a pickle cauff!" replied the Deil in his blindest tones; and so completely was the good-natured farmer taken in

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

that he actually assisted the rascal to carry out the sack of corn to the cart outside. He had a collie dog that knew its business well. One day the couple were passing the smithy at Kilry, and the dog captured a fine plump chicken, which his master quickly hid at the bottom of his cart. But the guidwife saw, and flew out upon him. "Far are ye gaen wi' ma chuck!" exclaimed she. The Deil was indignant. "Your chuck!" quo' he; "hae ye lost ane?" "Ay, fine ye ken that, ye scoondrel, and hae it this verra meenit in your cart there!" Now, Dutch chickens have the peculiarity of lacking the tail, and the Deil, fumbling at the bottom of the cart, managed to deprive the luckless fowl of that appendage. "Fat sort o' bird was it, noo?" asked he. She told him, whereupon he produced the only one he had, which was manifestly Dutch, and he drove off before the dumfounded wife had recovered speech. He was offering a cartload of peats for sale. John How, flesher, Alyth, asked him where he had got them; nobody ever supposed he came by anything honestly. "Fat needs ye speir?" was the reply; "I ca' frae the moss as lang's there's peats to ca', syne I juist help mysel' at ony peat-stack where they can be spaired!" On the same lines was his reply when he asked the "lend o' a cow" from a farmer, and the latter said—"Far hae ye meat to gi'e a cow, man!" "Tak' ma wird for't," retorted the Deil, significantly, "gin I hae a coo she'll no want meat!" Anything on the roadside to which he took a fancy he never hesitated to appropriate if able, but the curious thing was that although the owners missed their property and knew where it had gone, they never made any complaint. They simply went to Ramsay and mentioned they were

The Deil o' Glenisla.

in a bad way for such and such articles, and their own goods, if not perishable, were generally returned to them. He was such

AN INCORRIGIBLE PILFERER

that a former innkeeper took a stolen spade of his own out of the Deil's cart twice in one day—almost as good as Petticoat Lane, where one might have his handkerchief stolen at one end, and sold to him at the other. A farmer having missed a bridle, and our friend having passed that way, his son was sent after him, found the bridle in the cart, and managed to get off with it without being noticed by the unconcerned driver. One day the Deil ran off with the minister of Glenisla. The rev. gentleman was jogging along on his nag to Kirrie market, when he made up on his Satanic Majesty. He did not just say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" but it amounted much to the same thing, for he invited the Deil to ride at his back, warning him at the same time, however, to "behave himself." The Deil's hoofs—or feet—were tired, and he was only too glad to accept the offer. Things went all right with this odd-looking couple till they reached the market-stance, when the minister asked the party behind to get down, instead of doing which the disturber of peace gave the animal a great whack with his stick, which set it off at a trot, while he bawled out at the top of his voice for the entertainment of the unsanctified crowd, "Ha, ha, lads! Juist see here—the

DEIL'S AWA' WI' THE MINISTER!"

Another very amusing trick he played upon a couple of shoemakers. He ordered a pair of boots from each, the understanding being that he was to pay for them on delivery. But when

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

delivery came, to each of the messengers in turn he confided as something quite unprecedented that he was short of cash, but he would look along to Alyth in a day or two to pay for the boots. The messengers had strict orders—c.o.d.—or bring back the boots. The plausible schemer managed, however, to get one of each consignment left behind—for different feet, depend upon it—and, although a little “off” as a pair, they were “a gran’ fit,” he declared, “an’ far wad ye get a chaper pair?” He was on the road to Kirrie on one occasion when he was met by the farmer of Pitewan, who gave him a line to an ironmonger for a pair of iron rings for cart wheels, and arranged with the Deil to take them to the blacksmith at Pitmuddie (David Grewar), where they were to be left. The Deil not only brought the rings to the smith, but got them put on his own cart wheels, and drove off with them in great glee. He met Pitewan coming along with his cart to the smiddy. “Did ye get thae rings a’ richt, Ramsay?” inquired the farmer. “’Deed did I,” replied he, “jist look at them. Man, aren’t they rinnin’ round fine?” and off he bolted. His landlord ordered him to quit his house, but he would not budge and had to be ejected, his “furniture” being thrown into the road, and, to make things siccar, the old “rickle” of a building he had occupied was razed to the ground. The man of resource had expected as much, however, and without any concern took up residence in a neighbouring sandhole. Here he did a big business, and managed to get the use of another old house at Dyke End, Lintrathen, when winter came on. There he remained for many years thereafter, his horse occupying one end and he the other, one entrance serving for both. By

The Deil o' Glenisla.

and by, age telling upon him, he became more and more dependent upon the kind offices of his neighbours, who did not fail him, for, as already hinted, the Deil was not so black as he was painted, and was known to have done

MANY A GOOD TURN

when it was in his power. With his old grey horse and his cart he was at the bidding of any one who required his services, for which he would never take money, a bite or sup and a dram for himself, and a feed for his horse from those who could give it, being all his demands. He generally carried a pocketful of pease with which to treat the boys, with whom he was in great favour, but he was a terror to the girls, as he always professed to be in a great state to kiss them. It was a sad day when, having become unable to look after his horse, it had to be sold. Then, weakness increasing, he was taken away by some relatives, with whom he ended his days some time about 1855, when nearly 70 years of age, and was buried at Lintrathen. Our esteemed friend, "Auld C." (Mr John Smith, Alyth), touches off the Deil in this lively fashion.

A richt queer billie was the De'il,
A rattlin' loon to rive an' steal;
Auld Nickie schuled his name-son weel
 To work his wab;
The saintly sheep he weel did keel,
 But ne'er luit dab.

Stravaigin' wi' his horse an' cairt,
Aye turnin' roond some ither airt,
Aye leavin' nocht in hale or pairt
 Gin he had room;
He neither had the hand nor heart
 To drive hame tume.

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Baith stock an' stockin' slipped awa',
Kail, neeps, hay, tatties, girse, an' straw,
Stooks o' corn, hale stacks an' a'—

Naething cam' wrang;
The De'il took credit for them a'—
His score ran lang.

At times the cadgin' trade he tried,
But stinkin' fish he always cried,
An' richt or wrang, it's no denied—
The story's true,
For neither tongue nor hands were tied—
Baith would be noo.

In yon wee shiel at the Dyke-end
Mony a wicht his wye wud wend,
For meat an' drink o' ilka blend—
Sometimes his ain—
An' fowls whase pedigree nane ken'd
Were put frae layin'.

But noo I maun gie owre this spring,
Nae mair wi' glee yon rafters ring,
An', glad or sad, I canna sing—
Peace to each shiel—
Lintrathen lang syne lost its King,
Dyke-end its De'il.

ROBERT FORD.



Robert Ford

POET AND LITTERATEUR.

XXXVIII.

ROBERT FORD,

POET AND LITTERATEUR.



The subject of our present sketch is so well known, personally or by his writings, to all lovers of Scottish literature, that any introduction to our friend the "general reader" would seem unnecessary. It might appear as though we should stop there—but that is mere theory. The real fact is that it is precisely those people we know a lot about of whom we like to learn more, while people we know little or nothing about we are only too willing, as a rule, to let severely alone. Besides, we are aware that our friend has written about nearly everybody else; and as there is no hint of any forthcoming autobiography "which he is the author of"—to quote the inimitable Sir William Topaz of the White Elephant—it is only to be supposed that he should be put on the operating table himself occasionally. And certainly the man who has managed, out of the scanty leisure at his disposal after the demands of a busy commercial life have been met, to write

OVER A SCORE OF VOLUMES

of prose and verse, all good acceptable matter, and done more to quicken the national sentiment for everything Scottish—song, story, and scenery; men and women—than, probably, any

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

other living writer, is a very promising subject. He was born on the 18th July 1846, in the little village of Wolfhill, in the parish of Cargill, less than a mile from the birthplace of the late Dr Croll, whose career was sketched in a previous article. His father, Joseph Ford, an honest, industrious, sterling son of the soil, was a pit sawyer in his early days, and, in addition to the cottage in which our friend and most of the family—five sons and one daughter—were born and brought up, possessed a bit of land on the Stobhall estate. His mother was one of the sweetest, most patient, and most lovable women that ever breathed—the tenderest and most devoted of mothers. Her son will remain his mother's boy till his own last breath. She and that other dear one, his departed wife—another gentle creature—are but “white celestial thoughts” now in the secret sessions of his heart; but in these twin souls, sainted and sacred for ever more, his

Faith in womankind beats with his blood.
And trust in all things high comes easy to him.

His father was noted as having been a sturdy, straightforward fellow. He officiated as precentor for several years in Cargill Parish Church before the Disruption, and his son, in his “Thistledown,” tells a story illustrative of these traits. One morning he had just raised the Psalm tune, when he discovered he had chosen a wrong metre. There was no make-believe in him; so he stopped short, looked round upon the congregation, and announced in a clear, firm voice—“I am wrong!”—gathered himself together, and almost immediately after, recalling the right tune, sailed off into the empyrean of melody in grand style. On coming out of the church, the factor's wife

Robert Ford, Poet and Litterateur.

complimented him in these words: "Now, Joseph, I see that a well-corrected mistake looks first-rate!" He "came out" with his minister, the Rev. Michael Stirling, at the Disrupton, and subsequently filled the "lettern" in the Free Church of Cargill under Messrs Stirling, Irvine, and Yule.

THE BOY ROBERT

attended the Parish School, and recalls with equal pride and gratitude that he is one of a couple of thousand or so scholars whom his greatly-esteemed old master, Mr Alexander Fergusson—now at the Mains of Cargill, and known far and near for his historical and antiquarian researches—passed through his hands. School was available during the winter months only, however. Summer generally saw him herding, or at other healthy outdoor work—greatly to his own benefit and that of everybody else, considering the knowledge and love of nature thus generated and fostered within him. By and by he went to Dundee, and served in the employment of Messrs Baxter Bros. for ten years, leaving for Glasgow in 1878. Arrived there, he became clerk in the warehouse of Messrs J. & W. Campbell & Co., and there he is still. Such is a brief outline of the "business" aspect of our friend's activities, but although no more faithful servant could be found anywhere—a fact of which his employers have shown their appreciation in a marked manner more than once—who, it may be asked, except his employers, cares one farthing whether it is jute, or iron, or treacle, valued at £1 or a million, that he is busy invoicing and corresponding about day after day? His real business in life has been done when he was doing nothing whatever—only idling away his leisure time after

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

hours writing things like "The Cankert Bairn," or "The Braes Abune Stobha'," or "A Summer Song," or "The Banks o' Tay," or perhaps it might be a screed o' prose such as "The Depootation," or "Patie Pirnie's Woon'," or "The Pottingerdraucht," or "Johnnie Norrie's Bamboozlement," or an appreciatory sketch of some brother poet, or a descriptive article dealing with some historic spot or event, or the history of some old sturdy, fail-me-never ballad, or indeed anything else of the

HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTIONS

which have come from his pen. His "Tayside Songs" (1895), just to name something at random, is worth more to humanity than all the rich cargoes of merchandise that have passed through the establishment since he set foot within its walls. How many bales of cloth for this?—

There's nae spot on earth like the hame o' ane's youth,
Where the first sparks o' love leapt into flame;
Where heart-strings were hankit and sealed sae wi' truth,
That, live we forever, they're hale and the same.

Or, how many gross pairs of boots for this?—

Hurrah for auld Scotland, hurrah
Her heather-capp'd mountains sae hie,
Her hills and her dells,
Her lochs and her fells,
Her rivers that row to the sea,
Her burnies that dance in their glee;
An', lauchin', owre ilka linn fa';
Aff bonnets, ilk' ane,
An' wave the refrain—
Hurrah for auld Scotland, hurrah!

And what is the exact value in fire-irons or pick-axes for these lines?—

The bonniest bairn in a' the warl'
Has skin like the drifted snaw,
An' rosy wee cheeks, sae saft an' sleek,
There never was ither sic twa;

Robert Ford, Poet and Litterateur.

It's een are just bonnie wee wandered stars,
Its leggies are plump like a farl,
An' ilk' ane maun see't, an' a' maun declare't
The cleverest bairn,
The daintiest bairn,
The rosiest, cosiest, cantiest bairn,
The dearest, queerest,
Rarest, fairest,
Bonniest bairn in a' the warl'!

But space will run out too fast at this rate. Here is a list of Mr Ford's principal achievements:—"Hame-Spun Lays and Lyrics" (1878), "Humorous Scotch Readings" (1881), "Auld Scots Ballants" (edited 1889), "Thistledown" (1891), "The Harp of Perthshire" (edited 1893), "Ballads of Bairnhood" (edited 1894), "Tayside Songs" (1895), "American Humorists" (1897), "Poems and Songs of Alexander Rodger" (edited 1897), "Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland" (edited 1899), "Song Histories" (1900), "Vagabond Songs and Ballads of Scotland" (2d series, edited 1901), "Poems of Burns" (edited 1902), "Willie Winkie, and Other Poems" (edited 1902). Every one of the foregoing has been well received, not only by the Scottish press, but English as well, and many of them have run into several editions. His "Vagabond Songs" (1st series) is out of print—probably the 2d series also. His "Burns" is one of the most popular editions in the market. "Ballads of Bairnhood" is

INCOMPARABLY THE FINEST COLLECTION

of the kind in existence. Of it Alexander Anderson ("Surfaceman") predicts that "it will be precious to the heart of many a mother yet who at the present moment is nursing her doll in the innocent joy of infancy." J. M. Barrie also praises it. "Thistledown" is far and away the best all-round book of Scottish humour we

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

have. It has gone through many editions, and both it and the "Auld Scots Ballants" have been pirated in America in a very flattering manner. A more respectable and acceptable form of flattery was that of a prosperous Scot in Klerksdorp, South Africa, who named his villa after "Thistledown" in honour of the most pleasurable book he had ever read since leaving the land of "Nemo me impune" associations. Of the "Harp of Perthshire" one critic asserts that the author has "produced a volume of which any county in Scotland might justly feel proud." But that is not all. Innumerable articles, poems, &c., scattered about the periodicals have still to be taken into consideration, many of which will never be collected. Our author has even done some clever pen-and-ink sketches for the enhancement of some of his books. He just wants to set all his lyrics to music to round off his "infinite variety." Yet, even when all this is put down to his credit, we are only at the threshold of the matter. There is

THE MAN HIMSELF

behind everything. Is it necessary to tell the uttermost stranger that the author of "Thistledown" is a first class story-teller? Or that he is the very life of every party he finds himself among, and is "sair ta'en oot," like the man from the neighbouring parish to his own? One would imagine from the Ballad and Burns's Clubs and other Associations to which he belongs, the number of lectures, &c., he is inveigled to deliver in a season—not to mention other functions—that he had absolutely nothing else whatever to bother his head about; but he is a splendid illustration of the saying, "If one wants a thing well done give it to a busy man." And by that word we are back once more to the

Robert Ford, Poet and Litterateur.

real business of our friend's life, which is to utilise his leisure hours in making his fellow-countrymen and women know and love the men and women who have made our country what it is, our literature what it is; to know and love the country which has been the inspiration and reward of so much that is glorious in word and deed of past times; best of all, to know and to love each other. All this he does, chiefly by the gospel of cheerfulness; honest, hearty mirth; and if tears are not far off in places, and the verse trembles on the balance of doubtful issue, he knows and we feel the cause. And his reward for it all is the exceeding great reward, not of admiration or mere esteem, but of gratitude and affection from countless human hearts here and elsewhere, now and for long years to come.

With so much to "wyle amang," it is difficult to choose something thoroughly representative of Mr Ford's style; but the following is one of the most admired of his lyrics:—

THE BRAES ABUNE STOBHA'.

The summer sun shines bonnilie on mountain, loch, an' lea,

An' life, an' love, an' beauty thrive whaur'er the e'e may fa';

Ilk' livin' thing is happy like, an' heart-content but me,

But I am wae wi' thinkin' o' the braes abune Stobha'.

We've bonnie braes around us here, I view them a' day lang,

An' aft an' sair I'm blamed because I fret for else ava;

But, ah, oor feet still wander gaets oor hearts will hardly gang,

An' mine, I fear, has never quat the braes abune Stobha'.

'Twas yonder I was born an' bred, an' ilka whinny knowe
Is hallowed by some tale o' love that happened lang awa';

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Yon roadside cot ayont the kirk held happy hearts, I
 throw—

 An', oh, they'll aye be dear to me, the braes abune
 Stobha'!

Hech-wow; but it's a thrawart fate that workin' bodies
 dree,

 Sin' maistly a' to win their bread maun wander far
 awa';

The family nests get herried sune by dour necessitie—

 'Twas him, the loon, that twyned me frae the braes
 abune Stobha'.

Yet ower yon hills abune Dunblane, an' by the banks o'
 Tay,

 An', oh, gin I could waft me there but for an 'oor or
 twa,

I'd come again wi' pith anew to bide the hoped-for day,

 When I'll return, nae mair to lea' the braes abune
 Stobha'.

They're bonnie in the mornin', they're bonnier at noon,

 An' oh, they're ever glorious just e'er the gloamin' fa';

The flowers that hae the sweetest scent, the birds the
 sweetest tune,

 Are those that bloom an' sing amang the braes abune
 Stobha'!

**JAMES FERGUSON,
STANLEY.**



JAMES FERGUSON.

LYRIC POET.

XXXIX.

JAMES FERGUSON,

STANLEY.



It is one of those things which the blundering world never wholly understands and never willingly permits—the anonymity or pseudonymity of an author. It is also one of those things which, sooner or later, the author himself generally regrets in the end. Both methods are very useful no doubt where a back-door has, unfortunately, come to be desirable as a means of escape from irate critics prowling about with shot guns, and it is among the supremest pleasures of life—quite equal to Charles Lamb's doing good by stealth and being found out by accident—to have the good fortune to hear happy things said of one's aims or efforts, all unknown to the first-class judge of a good thing who utters them. But the system has its drawbacks, and when the public have come to be sufficiently interested in the productions of an author to have some curiosity as to his personality, that individual, even if he elect to come before the curtain and own up in *propria persona*, has to pay extravagantly for the former immunity from publicity which he enjoyed. To persist wearing the mask right through life entails still greater annoyances upon both parties interested in the matter. The point need not be

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

laboured, but if the writer might presume so far, his advice to young writers is: Stick your own name to what you write, and take your chance; it will prove more satisfactory in the long run.

These remarks are suggested by the probability that "Nisbet Noble" is a name much better known to the majority of readers than that which heads this article—an undesirable condition of affairs which need no longer exist. Our friend hails from Stanley, where he first saw light in 1842. His father was a most estimable man who left nothing but pleasant memories behind him; his mother died when he was about 10 years of age, and we have only to read his "Tullymet"—one of the finest things not strictly lyrical he has ever written—to realise how much that meant to him. After the usual village schooling, James was sent to Stanley Mills, and up to the age of 14, with light work and plenty of spare time, he fairly revelled in the lovely and historic district around him, not the least attraction of which was the lordly Tay at his door. But, as a brother-poet laments—

It's a thrawart fate that workin' bodies dree,
Sin' maistly a' to win their bread maun wander far awa';

and sometime about 1856 the "poet lad" went to Dundee, where he duly "served his time" behind a grocer's counter. Glasgow next claimed him as a shop assistant, then we hear of him back in Dundee in partnership with his brother; but business not prospering there, he was once more in the western metropolis, determined, apparently, to take out of life as much as possible—first as labourer in an engineer's shop; then as engine-keeper, timekeeper, and clerk. The Fair City was the next lodestone, and here he found employment for some time in Pullar's big estab-

James Ferguson, Stanley.

lishment, then in the Inland Revenue office and in a solicitor's office as clerk. As an enameller and painter of provision merchants' tickets he peregrinated the country, and became acquainted with some of the fairest districts in the dear old Scotland he has lauded in song so often.

Back in Perth once more, he became clerk in the Co-Operative Stores. Finally, "home," where he is at the present time, warping foreman in the cotton mill he wrought in as a boy. Should the kindly inquirer, however, ask for "Jamie Ferguson, the poet," he will probably get at his man all the sooner. It is hardly necessary to say that with such lyrical gift as he has given evidence of our friend began to "lisp in numbers" at an early age. When a mere apprentice lad he was diagnosed as hopelessly "bad wi' poetry," his first production, entitled "Lucknow," appearing in the "People's Journal" over 40 years ago. But although 60 years have passed over his head, of no one can it be more truly said than of the Stanley poet that

Years can never count for age
While hearts hold revelry with Time
And sport with Fate.

There is not a younger heart in Christendom. Encouraged by the reception of his first effort, the new star scintillated out in every direction. He has been a contributor to the "People's Friend" from the very start, many of his lyrics attracting the attention of musical readers able to wed them to tuneful melodies. Not a few of his lyrics have been copied into American, Canadian, and Australian papers. Year after year for a while he carried off first prize in the "People's Journal" and "People's Friend" poetical competitions, including a first prize three years in

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succession for a poetical charade in the latter popular Scottish miscellany. He has also been guilty of numerous readings in its pages, as well as in those of "Scottish Nights," and has even perpetrated a drama. A series of amusing articles of his, entitled "Cracks about the Country," ran for about two years in the "Scottish People"—dead, also, many years ago.

Aberdeen is well acquainted with Nisbet Noble's productions, for his pen ran riot in the "Free Press" over twenty years ago in his "Reminiscences of Saunders M'Sneeshin," and he—Nisbet, not Sandy—had another series under the title of "Snuffy Sandy's Lectures" in "Bon-Accord" of that ilk, together with a selection of "Songs by our own Lunatic" for the same paper. The fact is, he has written more than he can even name, much less produce or locate, for he is the most careless of parents to the offspring of his brain. His first booklet was his "Song of Solomon in a Modern Dress," which appeared in 1873. This was followed, in 1880, by the "Lays of Perthshire," containing 14 pieces, nearly every one of which is worthy of his reputation. His latest collection is "Wallace and other Poems," which saw light in 1897 in connection with a bazaar which was held in his native village. It contains 12 pieces, of which the following is one of the best, and gives a fair idea of our friend's lyrical vein:—

WALLACE, BRUCE, AND BURNS.

Where is the land on all the earth
Like to the land we own?
The land where broad-browed Freedom found
A birthplace and a throne.
The land where Bruce and Wallace fought
And tyranny down hurled,
The land where Burns poured forth the songs
Whose echoes fill the world.

James Ferguson, Stanley.

There is no land, no land like ours,
Where'er a footstep turns,
The land, the land of liberty,
Of Wallace, Bruce, and Burns.

The hills that rise around our heads
Are filled from base to brow
With memories of the mighty three
Whose names all honour now.
The waving woods, the raving winds,
The dashing waters all,
Our moors and mosses blend in one,
And swell the thunder call.

It rings across the heaving sea,
And thousands far and wide
Uplift their voices in reply
And raise their heads in pride.
Its echoes come across the deep
In answer back again,
And lands and peoples pause to note
The freeman-born refrain.

And lo, wherever Freedom waves
Her war-notched sword in air,
Her heroes bare their dauntless brows
And make our shout their prayer.
And may its spirit nerve their hearts
And teach them how to die,
And how to conquer, till at last
They learn like us to cry—

There is no land, no land like ours,
Where'er a footstep turns,
The land, the land of liberty,
Of Wallace, Bruce, and Burns.

Of the man himself, any one who meets him cannot but be impressed by the genuine harmony existing between the poet and his expression—the *perfervidum ingenium* is as evident in word and look as in his writings. He is a Scot to the core, and has but one love—his country, its beauties, its history, and its heroes. Only now and then has he sung of love; he is essentially

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heroic in his utterances, and these make for the coursing of warmer blood through the veins, the imparting of a more resolute fire to the eye and more nervous grip to the hand. No one among living Scottish poets is in more touch with reality than he when he sings of the—

Land of beetling crags and cliffs,
Of hills and glens and heroes.

Regarding “Tullymet,” which is one of the present writer’s favourites, it is interesting to note that some time ago, when much talk went the round of the press relative to the strength of the line in one of Kipling’s poems—

And salted earth down with their bones

—quite a number of correspondents to the newspapers pointed out that James Ferguson had said something like this, but much better, long before in the poem with the first part of which this sketch is concluded—

Every land earth owns
Is dinted deep with Highland heels
And strewn with Highland bones!

Countless admirers desire to see a thoroughly worthy collection of his poems: to which we can only add—*Nisbet Noblesse oblige!*

TULLYMET.

Fair Summer walks among the hills, and flowers rise up to greet
Its coming with a sunny smile, and kiss its jewelled feet;
The birds are tuned to song, and pour their orisons on high,
And beauty beams upon our gaze by land, and lake, and sky.
The woods, the mighty harps of earth, to solemn music bend—

James Ferguson, Stanley.

High heavenwards to the throne of God the swelling
 strains ascend;
The listening earth looks up in love, and quivers like a
 gong
With ecstasy of bliss beneath the magic of the song.
The laughing burnies dance for joy beneath the passing
 breeze.
The waving corn-fields respond, and roll like silver seas;
The very shadows seem to smile in sunny Summer's face,
And softly creep to kiss its feet from out each hiding-
 place.
A fairer scene on all the earth I've never gazed on yet
Than this that greets my eyes upon the braes of Tullymet.

The spot is hallowed unto me; mayhap 'tis this that
 throws
Such glory o'er the spreading scene till all the prospect
 glows,
And brightens into beauty's best; for here, where now
 I stand,
Once stood my mother's baby feet. Here oft my mother's
 hand
Hath plucked the flowers from off the braes and gleaned
 among the corn;
In this thatched cottage by my side the sainted dead was
 born.
No wonder that it seems to me the fairest spot on earth—
No wonder that my heart awakes as if a newer birth
Had fallen on it as I tread the paths she must have
 trod,
Long ere her gentle soul had flown to walk above with
 God.
None knew the love I bore the dead, none now can ever
 know;
I feel her presence round me yet wherever I may go.
I would to God that she had lived to train my steps
 aright,
And teach me how to walk the world, and how to fight
 the fight.
A weed upon the sea of time I float about to-day,
The sport of all the waves of thought that o'er my feelings
 play;
She left me all too young—she died—I did not loudly
 rave:
How my struck heart was numbed that day they bore her
 to the grave!
The blow was far too deep. It stunned. Its deadening
 influence still

James Ferguson, Stanley.

Weighs weightily on brain, and nerve, and heart, and
soul, and will.

It made me what I am, alas! not what I might have been,
Had she but lived who loved me so. But let the false
between

That spreads from that far time to this be buried where
it lies.

Awake, my heart! from yon high heaven my mother's
loving eyes

Look down on me. For her dear sake I'll make an effort
yet,

And tune my life to better things; I swear it, Tullymet!

JAMES Y. GEDDES.



Bailie Geddes

POET AND PUBLIC MAN.

XL.

JAMES Y. GEDDES, POET AND PUBLIC MAN.

The man who can write a book which tempts a critic of high standing to devote a series of four long and appreciative articles to its elucidation is likely to have some good stuff in him, and such a man is he whose name heads this article. "I like that," said our critic regarding one of the poems in "The New Jerusalem;" "I like that; I feel it is written by a man who would be worth knowing." From which dictum the present writer would be the last individual in the world to dissent, and so should the reader also before all is said. Mr Geddes was born in Dundee in 1850, but some of his earliest and most pleasant recollections are connected with Strathmore, and at one time he was as intimate with the Barlatch in Coupar Angus, Causewayend, Campmuir, Kettins, Lintrose, and Burrelton as he was with the streets and alleys of Dundee. It is evident, however, that both in thought and action our friend is a son of the city—a product of its stirring life and ceaseless activities; and the majority of his pieces bear the impress of a mind concerned with its

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS,

its labour conditions, and class antagonisms. This is felt in his first volume—the "New Jerusalem"—and even more so in his latest, "In the Valhalla." But whatever he has written

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is stamped with the hall-mark of sincerity; the matter is always his chief concern, the form secondary; the matter itself, chiefly men and women. When he published his first book he was just turned twenty-five, and there was something so good in his last that it captured the critics, drawing from Richard Le Gallienne, a poet of no mean order himself, very high encomiums. The first is severe upon the "unco guid" and the conventions that too often pass for religion. There is no getting away from the fact that the poet had a subject of "bad eminence" to work upon, had clear and vigorous ideas regarding the subject, and could express his ideas in appropriate language. The book attracted such attention that it ran speedily out of print. A good deal of speculation was exercised and dogmatic statement made regarding the origin of the principal poem—nearly all wide of the mark. The facts are these. In his youth the author was a great reader, and became a member of Tay Square U.P. Church Literary Society, Dundee. This was one of the best Societies of the kind in the town, and among its former members may be mentioned David Deuchars, now General Manager of the goods department, N.B.R.; David Templeman, Provost of Blairgowrie; James Duffus, jute merchant, Calcutta; and J. J. Henry, leader in Conservative circles in Dundee. The Rev. Dr M'Gavin was pastor—a most worthy and conscientious minister, but conservative and orthodox to a degree—the very antithesis of the Rev. George Gilfillan. He could be very bitter at times; as witness his memorable attack on the "Dundee Advertiser," the "Scotsman," and Gilfillan in the Dundee U.P. Presbytery in connection with the instruction of the Edinburgh Presbytery to the former body

James Y. Geddes, Alyth.

to prosecute Gilfillan for heresy. The young man's sympathies were all with

THE GENIAL POET AND ORATOR,

and as President of the Literary Society, he came into contact with the Doctor, to whose rigid, Calvinistic theology and strict orthodoxy his freedom of thought and speech were particularly obnoxious. The result was open revolt on the part of our friend, who left the church and joined Lindsay Street Congregational Church, then being ministered to by the Rev. Mr Wallace, a man of deep insight and poetic temperament. The "New Jerusalem" was the outcome of this period of disturbance and transition, and to the circumstances referred to is due not a little of the invective and sarcasm it exhibits. The whole poem as well as some other things in the book are very typical of that phase of mind through which many thoughtful young men pass on the way to the region of the "Everlasting Yea." In Lindsay Street he had the privilege of coming into touch with some of the subtlest intellects and keenest debaters in Dundee, and no subject was outside review by the daring young spirits. Amongst Mr Geddes' most cherished friendships are those of the late William Reid, principal sub-editor of the "Dundee Advertiser," and W. F. Black, of the "People's Journal." Another old friend was the late James Cromb, of the "Evening Telegraph." A period of literary activity followed. As a member of the Dundee Burns Club Mr Geddes recalls with great zest the glowing spirits who used to meet of nights, each one moved as if he had

Meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

Coming to Alyth about twenty years ago, the backward condition of sanitary affairs—the drainage scheme had been under discussion for about nine years—led him under a *nom de plume* to start a correspondence in the “Dundee Advertiser,” the result of which was the creation of a Working Men’s Municipal Party, and Mr Geddes’ ultimately entering the Police Commission. With the single exception of Provost Tod, he is now the oldest member of the Town Council, to which he was once more returned last November. During all these years, it is hardly necessary to say, he has ever been on the side of progress. He has been a member of the School Board for many years, and occupies exactly the same position there as on the Town Council—the respected Chairman, Mr George Duncan, being his only senior in service. In politics, as any one might safely infer from his poetry,

OUR FRIEND IS A PRONOUNCED LIBERAL.

Along with several other ardent spirits he was the means of starting a Radical Association, which was merged in the Liberal Association many years ago. Again, as champion of the people’s rights, it is recalled that he was associated with Bailie M’Kenzie and Mr M’Glashan in the celebrated Reekie Linn affair, which created considerable stir at the time. With an indifference to convention and much independence of spirit which have exhibited the prickly side of his character occasionally, he has, as Le Gallienne points out, the saving sense of humour in his composition, which helps to tone down the acerbities of debate, and probably even his opponents would rather have him on

James Y. Geddes, Alyth.

their side than the other. To the present writer, however, the most interesting phase of our friend's personality is the poetical. The storm and stress of public life is the inveterate enemy of all poetry, particularly of a reflective or philosophical character; yet he has managed to do much admirable work in these lines. In addition to his "Jerusalem," he has two other volumes—"The Spectre Clock of Alyth" and "In the Valhalla," already mentioned; together with the libretto of a juvenile opera, "The Babes in the Wood." Many prose articles, reviews, &c., have also to be placed to his credit, the "Weekly Sun," "Weekly Star," and other London periodicals being open for his contributions. "In the Valhalla" has had a splendid reception; Gallienne himself devoted nearly a column of eulogium to it in the "Star" on its appearance. The author is a great admirer of Whitman and Emerson, it is evident, and some of the finest things he has written are in what is known as "Whitmanese." That is a matter of form; in interest and sympathy he is with all things "common" and simple—synonymous for the lovable and beautiful.

Warmth and love dwell on the levels,
Choose the common and be great,

is his own ideal, and there is a philosophical serenity of mood and a clarity of vision manifested in his writings which prove his consciousness of the fact that

The soul of all things is invisible.
And nearest to that soul the poet sings.

Not infrequently, however, there is a pervading note of sadness and questioning which only indicates his earnestness and sincerity; but the net result notwithstanding is optimistic rather than the reverse, and the fainting heart is nerved

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

anew by contact with his tried spirit. His best work is seen in his longest poems; one of the present writer's favourites is "The Farm"—a deeply pathetic story of a happy country couple, who, longing for a farm of their own, go into the public-house line in order to gather the wherewithal, with the result that the man fills a drunkard's early grave. Here is an extract. It deals with the couple now settled down to work in the public-house:—

In the country, great preparations, too;
Ah, how they used to watch for the spring!
Do you think of it, wife?
Do you remember it, husband?
Over the bar they hung a bird's cage, with a lark in it
and a piece of green turf.
The bird broke into song; his songs were songs of re-
membrance; he saw it all too—
Primroses springing in the woods and pale anemones,
Hedges bursting into foliage,
Trees sending forth delicate leaves, falling like spray all
around them;
Children stringing again the daisies and buttercups,
Yellow blossom on the broom and the whin,
Nature hurrying on to the front her troops and under-
ground forces;
The old mandate set forth, "Let there be life and
light,"
Creation again.
Birds singing everywhere.
New birds in a new world,
Twitter, chirrup, flutter—never off the wing,
Their nesting a new thing,
Their songs new, and their mates superb and unequalled;
New bliss and domesticity;
Chaos threatening them if the nest be unfinished and the
hatching be not over in time,
Twitter, chirrup, flutter, hurry, and bustle,
Old birds going about the old work, soberly, sagaciously;
not just so active,
Singing seldomer they, deeper, fuller songs, with a touch
of sorrow in them;
They have memories;
They know there may be troubles;
They remember of such things as ravished nests.

* * * * *

James Y. Geddes, Alyth.

The Farm comes nearer;
They almost smell the flourish of lilac and gean trees;
The coins drop, drop, dropping into the till—
Every penny a prisoner, not one of them needlessly
spent.

* * * * *

In the country midsummer.
How the throat of the lark throbs as he thinks of it;
Clover in the fields up to the knees of the children;
The making of hay;
The corn, tall, rich, green, succulent.
Kine in the shade loitering, whisking the flies with their
tails;
The great blades on the trees, open, expanded, taking all
they can get of the sunshine;
Fruit in the orchards, just needing the mellowing touch
of autumn;
Strawberries ripe;
Children gathering rasps in the wood.

* * * * *

Still nearer and nearer the Farm.

* * * * *

Autumn.

The lark seldomer singing;
They scarcely speak of the country.

* * * * *

Can this be the youth whose voice was to her as the fall-
ing of water in summer, the sound of whose coming
made her cheeks flush and her bosom quicker pulsate?
She remembered yet of the walks in the twilight, of the
whisperings low, of the pressing of hands, of the
loitering in nightly farewells;
She remembered of him who had sung of her, loved her,
wooed her, toiled for their little home, and married
her.

For these things the sot was sacred—he was transformed
before her;

Memory hung round him a golden aureole;
Still she loved on.

* * * * *

The mourners gather with long crape and white weepers;
Through the streets goes the hearse, with a dismal pro-
cession of coaches.

* * * * *

Snow on the ground;
The roses are gone and the honeysuckle;

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

The lilac trees are lifeless, so are the ashes and gean trees;

The farmhouse is naked and desolate, fronting the full force of the blast.

The streams are sealed with the frost,

The birds are silent,

The sky is forbidding and sombre,

The wind moans and tosses about the withered leaves.

It would have been a pleasure to quote "A Common Affair"—

'Tis nothing rare,

Just a common affair—

A sale on the street!

But want of space forbids. Our final extract is from "Glendale & Co.," and gives a good idea of the author's sarcastic vein:—

Glendale! I think I saw you the other day;

It was at a meeting to greet a Distinguished Traveller.

Distinguished Traveller had penetrated to the centre of Africa;

The natives not acquainted with the blessings of civilisation, of trade, and of commerce,

Went naked, or nearly so; lived in huts in the forest, wore rings in their noses:

Unhappy benighted natives!

Natives not so anxious to receive the blessings of civilisation as could be wished, opposed the progress of Distinguished Traveller.

Some of them had to be hanged, some of them had to be shot—

Action of intrepid traveller justifiable in your eyes.

I saw you and others applauding him as he spoke in his own justification;

It was necessary to impress on the minds of the natives the wholesomeness of discipline,

Natives idolatrous, worshippers of wooden gods;

Distinguished Traveller of a religious turn of mind; this also highly satisfactory;

In a moment of dire distress he cried unto Heaven; he informed the Supreme that if he were relieved he would mention the fact in the newspapers—

(Great concession this on part of Distinguished Traveller—not always inclined to share publicity with any one).

Distinguished Traveller was relieved; strictly faithful to his word he mentioned the fact in the newspapers.

**Rev. WM. HERDMAN,
RATTRAY.**



REV WM HERDMAN.

**PARISH MINISTER OF THE
OLD SCHOOL.**

XLI.

Rev. WM. HERDMAN,
RATTRAY.

Since the days of John Ross, minister of Blair, who flourished at the beginning of the 17th century, probably no name among clerics has caught the popular fancy of Blairgowrie district so completely as that of "Old Herdie," as he was frequently called, the subject of the present sketch. The two men differed from each other greatly in mental and physical characteristics, in tastes and pursuits, but each stands out in his own sphere as a man of distinct individuality, whatever more, and there is nothing so refreshing as that quality. John Ross is remembered best as the minister who, having failed by ordinary methods to get his people to turn out to church, displayed the wisdom of the serpent, whatever about the innocence of the dove, in arranging that markets should be held at the Kirkgate every Sunday at the close of the afternoon service. The result justified the innovation, and church attendance went up by leaps and bounds. The young fellows, however, developed an irreligious taste for shinty between the services, and exhortation proving of no use, this man of resource sallied out one day, stuck his staff in the ground, threw his coat upon it, and thus addressed it—

Stand ye there,
As minister of Blair,
While I, John Ross,
Get a game at the ba'!

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

The young men were highly elated at the conversion of their minister, but when he began to whack away at their shins instead of the ba', and managed to lame half the Sabbath desecrators before they had realised that his aims were not quite the same as theirs, they were glad to get out of the way as fast as they could and promise to behave better in future. The humour of that situation must have tickled the fancy of the genial minister of Rattray many a time, being entirely to his own mind, although he never found it necessary to use such drastic methods with his devoted parishioners. He was a son of the manse. His father, the Rev. Wm. Herdman, laboured from 1813 till 1838 in Rattray, where William, junior, was born in 1820. Herdman, the father, was a man of distinct gifts and character, and the family turned out of

MORE THAN ORDINARY ABILITY,

for, in addition to William, who was minister of Rattray from 1844 till 1878, there was James, who became D.D., and settled down in Melrose; Robert, the well-known portrait and genre painter, born in 1829, elected A.R.S.A. in 1858 and R.S.A. in 1863, dying in 1888; and Andrew, who was minister at Pictou, Nova Scotia, for many years, and came to Rattray as his brother William's successor in 1879, finishing his own course in 1894, after 15 years' work in his native parish. William Herdman, senior, died in 1838, and the probability is that had any one of the family been ready for the charge he would have got it at once. Rev. Francis Gillies, however, was appointed minister the year following, and, "coming out" at the Disruption in 1843, left the way clear for young William Herdman, who came straight from St Andrews University in

Rev. Wm. Herdman, Rattray.

1844, when only 23 years of age, to enter upon his inheritance. The Rev. Mr M'Kinlay, who had obtained the presentation on Mr Gillies' secession, met with so little encouragement from the people that he withdrew. The present pastor, the Rev. John Hunter, B.D., happens to have been ordained exactly fifty years, less a day, after Mr Herdman's ordination. Memory pictures this popular minister in his prime as a man under the medium height, of rather slight build, with high forehead, long Grecian nose, and bright eyes, hair carefully parted in the middle, full moustache and beard. As a preacher he was nothing remarkable, his style being somewhat fidgety. He had odd habits of twitching up his gown, folding his arms across his breast (with the gown clutched in his hands), pushing back his hair in an excited way with both hands, fumbling with the loose leaves of his sermon as if he had lost his place, &c., and delivered everything in a rather hard, sharp tone of voice—altogether a rather disappointing performance, so far as externals were concerned. The matter, however, was always excellent. Rev. D. S. Rae, of Kinloch, and Herdman were great friends, and used to exchange pulpits frequently. The minister of Kinloch was noted for his musical voice and grand delivery; one of his precentors used to declare he many a time felt quite ashamed to stand up and sing after hearing Mr Rae read the psalm. Among Rattray folk it was a common saying that if Mr Herdman would only write the sermons and Mr Rae read them they would get

PREACHING OF THE FIRST ORDER.

The Rattray minister's literary ability was shown also in numerous contributions to local

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

history—antiquarian, botanical, geological, ecclesiastical, &c., in all which he took deep interest, and was regarded as an authority. Then he had a regular passion for music, was always humming away to himself at some tune as he went about, much as the late Professor Blackie—and with voice just as “timmer.” He persisted in singing “tenor” from the pulpit on Sundays, with results more striking than agreeable, except to the singer. Not infrequently, when every one else in the church had finished, the minister was heard at it as full of “go” as ever. He even tried his hand at musical composition, and made a tune which he christened “Quiet Waters,” and to which he used to sing “The Lord’s My Shepherd.” But it is as pastor of his people, as an open-hearted, witty, optimistic, and sincere lover of his fellowmen that he is best remembered. He was one of the cheeriest and sunniest of mortals; a man not of many moods, but of one only, the keynote of which was Pippa’s morning song:—

God’s in His heaven,
All’s right with the world!

His sympathy with suffering and distress was heartfelt, and it mattered not whether the sufferer were of his own folk or of no kirk or creed whatever; every man he met was his “brither-man,” and commanded his willing service. As might be supposed, he was the best of company at social functions; say, for preference, at a soiree or the meeting after a bonspiel on the Stormont Loch, Rattray Club victorious. On such occasions he simply bubbled over with humour, and would keep the company

Racked with the pleasurable pangs of laughter just as long as he could. It was the same on the street; he could not pass any one he knew with-

Rev. Wm. Herdman, Rattray.

out some pleasant remark; if time permitted, there was a halt and a short "crack" full of witty comments on men and things. But although innumerable stories regarding "Old Herdie" are afloat, they are mere ghosts of no substance or body; or perchance, mere skeletons without flesh and blood. The spirit of the man was more than the thing said many a time. Touching the familiar, albeit affectionate and respectful enough term, "Old Herdie"—the gentleman most concerned resented its use most emphatically, and one day chose for text, "For I was an Herdman" (Amos vii. 14), and proceeded to

LAY DOWN THE LAW

in no dubious terms regarding the use and abuse of his own surname. Which outspokenness was characteristic of Rattray ministers; for the story goes that Rev. Mr Gillies used to be bothered greatly by the millers of the Milton, who occupied seats in the "loft," going to sleep as regularly as the sermon began. One day some of them aggravated the offence by starting to snore, which the old minister could not stand. He stopped short, and, turning in the direction of the culprits, thus addressed them:—"Vow, you millers o' the Milton, I gie ye due warnin' that gin ye dinna gie owre sleepin' an' snorin' durin' divine service I'll baith name and surname ye there whaur ye sit!" A certain gathering in Blairgowrie at which our friend appeared is a green memory to every one who was present and is alive to recall it. He had just arrived from Clunie drenched to the skin, but proceeded at once with his speech, which he prefaced by remarking that, however it turned out, it would not be a dry one, and after a half-hour's running

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

comments on everything, finished by declaring he had not spoken on a single subject he had intended at the outset. The Rev. Mr M'Crie, of the South Free Church, was a frequent butt of his wit. At another function, where both were present, Herdman maintained that Mr M'Crie, having announced his preference for golf to curling (the Rattray minister was a keen curler), he might be a good man, but was certainly not an ice man for all that. One day both were on Stormont Loch, and, some boys starting off sliding, M'Crie, followed by Herdman, were tempted to join in—the latter shouting out to the amused spectators—“Behold the minister of the South Free become a backslider!” Another brother of the cloth—noted for his parsimony—having minutely explained how to “do” Edinburgh on the most economical lines during the Assembly, our friend showed his gratitude by declaring that he was well up in “saving knowledge.” An amusing illustration of his unconventional style was given at a Kinclaven funeral. Herdman was asked to offer up prayer, but must have prayed with his eyes open, for, during the prayer, Rae of Kinloch joined the company, and immediately after the “Amen,” the Rattray minister called over to him, “Well, Rae, did you get that clockin’ hen?”—the explanation of which was that that gentleman had been at Rattray manse some days before in search of that useful animal. One of his folk having to be called upon on account of taking a drop too much, the tactful pastor was a long time coming to the point, and referred to many excellent people who had made slips occasionally, &c., &c. The watchful culprit was not slow to take advantage of his opportunities, and chimed in with a sigh—“Deed, ay; there

Rev. Wm. Herdman, Rattray.

was Dauvid, noo; he was a great sinner, a verra great sinner in his day, an' I'm jist as like him as can be, Mr Herdman, for I've a

GRAND NACK O' REPENTIN'!"

An Alyth minister, having had the misfortune to be taken to Murthly Asylum, our friend visited him, and was greeted by his old neighbour with the astonished query—"Good heavens, Herdie! are you here too?" His goodness of heart was without bounds, and, needless to say, was abused badly on occasions. One day he was accosted by a man whose child had died, and who did not have a coat in which to appear at the funeral. "Come away to the manse," replied the good-hearted pastor. "I'll give you the one I have on," which he did; and the greedy fellow, not satisfied, asked for a pair of boots. "No, no!" exclaimed the minister, examining the man's pedal coverings; "your boots are as good as my own—just give them a black!" Entering the church one week-day, just after the beadle had been having a quiet "draw" at his pipe, the minister sniffed for a little. "I feel an odour," said he. "I feel an odour—but not of sanctity." Talking of tobacco reminds one that he wrote a set of verses in imitation of Ralph Erskine's well-known poem "Thus Think and Smoke Tobacco," but in praise of curling. Here they are:—

CURLING SPIRITUALISED.

As hard and rough might be thy heart
As, but for lapidary's art,
Was once this Stone,
Now polished grown;
Thus think, and play at Curling.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

A heart for action needs a hand,
Or best resolves are at a stand;
 This Handle, so,
 Makes the Stone go;
Thus think, and play at Curling.

Like Ice—as slippery and as cold,
This world is, if your quest be gold;
 Without Heaven's Grip
 You downward slip;
Thus think, and play at Curling.

Like Rink kept clean by sweep of Broom
(So that your play may have clear room),
 Let life be kept—
 Away vice swept;
Thus think, and play at Curling.

If you would lie beside the Tee,
Cautious and straight your course must be;
 This glacial strife
 Resembles life;
Thus think, and play at Curling.

This man, greatly beloved of the people, passed suddenly away on the 6th December 1878, but "Old Herdie's" memory will be cherished for generations yet.

JAMES M'NAB.



MR J. M'NAB.

**CHAUTAUQUA TEACHER
AND LINGUIST.**

XLII.

JAMES M'NAB,

CHAUTAUQUA TEACHER AND

LINGUIST.

One of the most pressing questions with ministers just now is the training of Sabbath school teachers. It has been up at some of the Presbyteries more than once, and is bound to claim more and more attention as time passes, and the present haphazard system—or, want of system—has been superseded. The qualifications and status of day-school teachers have been greatly improved of recent years, while those of their fellow-workers on Sundays are practically what they were 25 years ago. The cry, “Educate!” has, however, been heard so persistently in the land, it looks as if their turn had at length arrived, although the ministers seem to be at a loss as to the best method of attaining their object. In Canada they settled the matter nearly 30 years ago with the inauguration of the great “Chautauqua movement,” with which the subject of the present sketch has been intimately associated all that time, through the various grades of student, teacher, lecturer, and diploma-holder, and some particulars of his career and of that institution should be of interest to every one concerned in the moral education of our young people. Mr M'Nab is a

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

native of Alyth, where he was born in 1830, his father being a hardware and general merchant there. The family came to Blairgowrie in 1833, however, and our friend's

EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS

are all of the Blairgowrie district. He received his start in education at one of those "dames' schools" which were common at the time, this one being taught by a Miss Robertson, whose "seminary" was up a pend just about where Mr Adamson, ironmonger, has his premises now, in the High Street. Afterwards Mr Campbell and Mr Low, in the Gas Brae; Mr Wilkie, assistant to Mr Soutar, in the Parish School; and Mr Johnstone, John Street School, had each in turn a shy at the business of producing a scholar of James. Wilkie is remembered as "a terror," and the late Dr Culross, President of Bristol Congregational College, and who was an assistant at one of the above schools, as a man of quite the opposite type of character. Among his fellow scholars of those days were the late Dr James Anderson, Forteviot; the late Dr Davie—and it is with deep regret the writer has to connote the fact—the late Mr Davie, Dunkeld; and Mr William Bissett, Glasgow. After the Disruption, which our friend recalls with lively interest, he attended the first F.C. School, which was at the corner of Jessie Street and Perth Street, where Councillor P. S. Robertson's premises are. The first teacher was James M'Donald, a capital classical scholar and a bit of a poet; understood also to have been associated with Motherwell in the production of "The Laird of Logan." In the Sabbath school he can never forget the services of the late Rev. Robert M'Donald, first F.C. minister of Blairgowrie,

James M'Nab.

and one of that band of devoted ministers which included M'Cheyne, Horatius and Andrew Bonar, W. C. Burns, John Milne, and others, whose fervid ministry led to the stirring revivals at Kilsyth and Collace, as well as elsewhere over the country. Under Johnstone and James M'Donald our friend got a good start in Latin and Greek in preparation for Edinburgh University, which he entered in 1845 with the intention of reaching the ministry. The late Rev. James Robertson, Cray, was one of his fellow-students, and during his time Edinburgh was famous by the presence of such men as Chalmers, Cunningham, Duncan, Fleming, and Fraser, of the New College; and Dunbar, Pillans, Kelland, Hamilton, and Wilson, of the University, to study under whom young men came from all quarters of the globe. The death of his father in 1849 caused the young student's return to his native place, and circumstances led to his abandonment of all idea of a ministerial career in favour of his father's business. After about four years in the shop now occupied by Mr Davidson, chemist, and Miss Panton, Wellmeadow, Mr M'Nab thought to

TRY HIS FORTUNES ABROAD,

and left for Canada, got a situation in Toronto in a big hardware store, and kept close to business, notwithstanding the many other exacting calls upon his time and energy which grew with the years, till 1886, when he retired. In 1864 he was induced to resume the study of the classics, and these led to Biblical studies; and, becoming interested at a later stage in the great Chautauqua College and its work and methods, he gradually acquired a working acquaintance with no less than 14 languages beside his own—namely, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

German, Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, Welsh, Gaelic, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish. That is his linguistic attainments meantime, but, being decidedly a young old man of only 72, capable and alert, there's no saying where he may stop. It is a far cry to 1860, but he recalls with a smile his experience as a member of the Queen's Own Volunteers, Toronto, when he acted as one of the bodyguard to the Prince of Wales (the present King), who visited Queenston Height to lay the foundation-stone of a monument to the memory of the "United Empire Loyalists," who had held to their allegiance to the mother country during the rebellion of 1812. Our friend was on guard near the Prince, and, happening to make some *sotto voce* remark to a fellow volunteer, got a dig in the back which caused him to turn round sharply, only to meet the stern eyes and sterner reproof of the Premier, Sir Francis Bond Head, who told him that "soldiers should never speak in the ranks!" In 1872 religious matters took a great hold upon him, and when Chautauqua was inaugurated in 1874 he was there, became a student, and came out among the first graduates of the session. This great movement sprang out of some "camp meetings" which used to be held near Lake Chautauqua a beautiful sheet of water some 22 miles long by 3 to 5 broad, situated in the western part of New York State, about 1200 feet above sea-level. It was the outcome of that very desire to do something for the Sabbath School teacher which has found voice in some of our Presbyteries recently. It began with the Methodist-Episcopalians, but on a broad, Catholic basis, including all denominations, and with the ultimate aim of embracing the teaching of every subject calculated to be of the least benefit

James M'Nab.

to the teachers. The germ-idea of the whole movement was the recognition of the necessity for a scientific as well as theological training; for general culture as well as special Bible knowledge—in a word, to increase the “week-day power” in connection with Sunday School work. It was held that the teacher there should be in a position to make free and illuminative use of the material supplied by history, literature, art, and science, and thus apply lessons of spiritual truth with freshness, variety, and effectiveness. From that fortnight's term in August 1874, under the joint control of Mr Lewis Miller, Akron, Ontario, and the Rev. John H. Vincent, New York, the course now extends the whole summer through, and includes

LECTURES AND PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

by Professors “on holiday” from all parts of America, on all sorts of subjects, to all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children. The grounds are very extensive and attractive, and sometimes as many as 12,000 people attend the Assembly, every individual of whom is bent upon making the most of his strenuous “vacation.”

The subjects taught range from cookery at the one end to Hebrew at the other, with no questions asked as to which may be regarded the more important of the two. In the great Rotunda, which is like nothing so much as an immense umbrella, being open all round, lectures are given to audiences of 2000 at times, while throughout the grounds and on the lake every agency which the quick American mind can think out for the combination of recreation with instruction is wrought for all it is worth. Some idea of the growth of the movement may be found from the number of departments now

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

under the Chautauqua University—all the outcome of that meeting in 1874:—"The Normal Union," for the training of officers and teachers; the "Teachers' Retreat," for the benefit of secular teachers; the "Teachers' Reading Union," which provides a course of helpful reading and study for secular teachers; the "Summer School of Language," ancient and modern (our friend has reaped much advantage from this department); the "Literary and Scientific Circle," for the promotion of reading habits amongst all classes of people, at their own homes and throughout the entire year—a department which has done incalculable good; the "University Institute;" the "College of Liberal Arts," for the assistance of earnest and non-resident students who are ambitious to win College honours on merit; the "Chautauqua School of Theology," for the education of ministers who wish a training equal to that given by any theological seminary; the "Book-a-Month Reading Circle;" the "Town and Country Club," for the training of people, young and old, in the habits of observation, and recording the phenomena of the physical world, with a view to practical experience in agriculture; the "Society of Fine Arts," the "Young Folks' Reading Union," the "Boys' and Girls' Class for Bible Knowledge;" the "Temperance Classmates," for instruction in the philosophy and ethics of the temperance reform; the "Society of Christian Ethics," the "Look-Up Legion," the "Chautauqua Cadets," similar to our own Boys' Brigades, which are the offshoot; the "Chautauqua Calisthenic Corps," for girls; the "Chautauqua Musical Reading Circle," the "Intermediate Class of Bible Knowledge," the "American Church School of Church Work,"

James M'Nab.

for the training of ministers and laymen in a broad and comprehensive system of practical theology; the "Chautauqua Press," which embraces a large number of publications, periodical and permanent, in connection with the movement, besides many other ramifications. One of the latter is the "I.B.R.A."—"International Bible-Reading Association"—which has

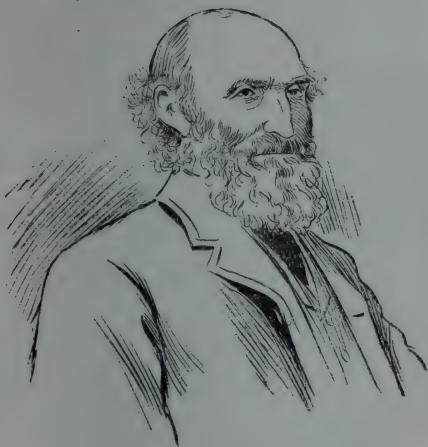
BRANCHES ALL OVER THE WORLD,

the same Bible lessons being published in over 30 different languages—a development which Mr M'Nab had much to do in originating, and in which he takes special interest, having been Secretary for the whole of Canada from 1887 till 1897, when the membership had risen from a few hundreds to over 11,000. As already stated, he was one of the first to take his diploma at Chautauqua, and has attended nearly every annual assembly since the start, lecturing, conducting classes in practical teaching, &c. He was on the Committee which drew up the "Chautauqua Normal Lessons," was a member of the Central Examination Committee for a number of years, and as such taught at various institutes, conventions, &c.; was a delegate from Canada to the World's Sabbath School Convention in London one year, and in 1894 was assistant Normal Secretary and Examiner. The year following he was appointed one of five to prepare the questions for the normal papers, to conduct the examination, and to appraise the papers afterwards; was eight years member of the Sunday School Committee to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and frequently Secretary; presiding examiner to the annual examination of scholars in Toronto Presbyterian Sunday Schools on the syllabus of

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

higher religious instruction, acted as elder in five congregations, was three years Secretary of Toronto Presbyterian S.S. Union, &c. A longing to revisit the scenes of his boyhood brought him over to this country in August 1901, but spring will in all probability see him back again in Canada. His heart is still in his beloved work, and his regret is keen that the value of the Chautauqua methods has not yet been freely recognised in this country. He feels certain of their efficiency to attain the results so many are anxious to see but are looking for in other directions in vain. There are now some 120 similar institutions—branch “Chautauqua’s”—throughout America, and 40 to 50 in other lands. In Britain the movement is little more than a name.

JAMES CROCKART.



**INVENTOR, CHAMPION SHOT,
AND ANGLER.**

XLIII.

JAMES CROCKART, INVENTOR, CHAMPION SHOT, AND ANGLER.

It is astonishing the pleasure everybody experiences in people of "individuality;" in that respect, at least, these are always interesting, whatever their status in creation or society. If one asks the reason why, there is but one answer—it is because they act simply, naturally; because they allow their real personalities free play and expression. If a step farther be taken, and it is inquired how it comes about that this naturalness is always attractive, the only answer seems to be that we somehow get into closer touch with the inscrutable source of all being, animate and inanimate, than is possible with the ordinary custom-encased, self-willed, and self-conscious man. Individuality was the dominant note in James Crockart's composition, as it was in that of his old and intimate friend, the late Dr Luman, who predeceased him by some two years. The doctor, however, was necessarily much more in the eye of the public than Mr Crockart, who spent the most of his time in his workshop among his guns and fishing-rods and ingenious contrivances. For tastes they had much in common, but although the man of medicine was a noted shot in his day, he never was an angler, while the subject of our

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

sketch held a premier position as both, and was famous as a maker of guns and fishing rods to boot. He was

A REMARKABLE MAN

from every point of view—even in appearance, having a finely developed head, particularly about the imaginative and reflective faculties; a strongly curved nose, rather high cheek-bones, and small but deep - sunk penetrating eyes. The Gask district claimed him as a native, the year of his birth being 1817. His father lived for several years at the "Brig o' Isla," near Cargill and the confluence of the Isla and the Tay. Here the piscatorial inclinations of his boy James had full scope for development. Never having been taught any trade, he took readily to toll-keeping like his father, and like him, was located in different parts of the country—Newtyle and Eassie among others—before finding a permanent home in Blairgowrie, which he did in 1852.

By this time he had managed, by pure force of mechanical genius, to teach himself the use of the turning-lathe and other tools connected with gun and rod-making, and he started a shop in the Wellmeadow, where the old Perthshire Arms used to stand. The excellence of his work brought such business that he had to remove to larger premises on the east side of Allan Street, after a number of years in which he built a large shop and workshop for himself on the opposite side, where he wrought for the remainder of his days. It is difficult saying whether it was for his guns or his rods that he was most celebrated. With respect to the former, it is well known that in the early days of the rifle he effected certain alterations in the rifling which greatly improved the trajectory

James Crockart.

power of that weapon, but, neglecting to patent them, other makers became acquainted with them, and duly annexed them. The

CLEVER BLAIRGOWRIE GUNSMITH

was by this time sending out his own make of rifle all over the country, so that it was quite an easy matter for any one in the line to copy his ideas. When it is stated that he made rifles, the word is to be understood in its fullest sense, for he designed and made every part of them, "stock, lock, and barrel," and beautiful samples of workmanship they were. He made his own tools also; no matter how delicate or intricate the work he was asked to do, if he did not possess the requisite tools for the purpose, he set to and contrived them—all, be it remembered, without ever having received a lesson in one thing or another. He was emphatically a man of mechanical ideas, a man of resource and device.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, who declared that a man who could not bore a hole with a saw and saw with an augur was of no use in the world, would have delighted in the Blairgowrie genius, who had hand and eye so perfectly trained that he could make a fine thread inside a narrow tube on a turning-lathe as accurately with an ordinary steel point as with a "tap." It was with

HIS OWN MAKE OF RIFLE

that both he and Dr Lunan performed their remarkable exploits in the early sixties at Aberdeen, Forfar, and St Andrews. The last-named place, as related in the sketch of Dr Lunan, was the scene of probably the greatest triumph of the two cronies, who fairly "swept the boards" in the way of prizes during a wappinschaw there,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

the principal trophies—a cup and piece of plate for the county and city respectively—together with some other things of less note, becoming their property. It was all arranged beforehand that the gunsmith should enter for the one great event and the doctor for the other, and both came out at the top.

Crockart managed his share of the contract all right some time before his partner, whose last shot at a thousand yards was fired under most dramatic conditions—a party rushing forward just as he was preparing to aim with the information, obviously intended to put him in a state of nerves, that he would have to make a “centre” (counting two in those days) to tie with his opponent, and a “bull’s-eye” (counting three) to beat him. What the brusque, plain-speaking Blairgowrie doctor said in reply was never intended for ears polite, but the on-lookers enjoyed it immensely; and when at last the final bullet found its billet as

A “BULL’S-EYE”

their enthusiasm knew no bounds. Our friend the gunsmith was never able to use the rifle again, however, after a certain occasion when he received from behind the contents of a gamekeeper’s gun at fifteen paces distant—some of the pellets going right through the back of his neck into his throat. Even up till his death he had some thirty remaining in his head; it seems miraculous he was not killed outright.

He was always ready for a day’s sport with the fowling-piece notwithstanding this, and was a prime shot. From the time that the late Mr Grimond acquired the estate of Glenfericht (in 1868) till within a year or two of our veteran sportsman’s death, he never missed a Twelfth with the genial laird. As an angler, again, he

James Crockart.

had no equal in the district; probably not in Perthshire. His instinct for the proper flies, where to find the fish, and every other matter of importance to disciples of the immortal Izaak was as infallible as it was incommunicable.

While other anglers of experience would be fumbling at their hookbook in a state of desperation for something to tempt the fish, or whipping the water with barren results, the veteran angler, father of them all, seemed to take the first fly that came to hand, the fish seemed to rise at the first cast, and he would go on quietly

FILLING HIS BASKET

without any trouble or fuss whatever. Rare old Izaak and he would have chummed it thoroughly had they known each other. One can imagine the English worthy whispering in the ear of his northern brother—"It is said by many that the angler must observe his twelve several flies for the twelve months of the year: what think you of that, Piscator?" "I never think of it at all." That makes the old man laugh, and he adds—"I say, he that follows that rule shall be as sure to catch fish and be as wise as he that makes hay by the fair days in an almanac!" Then, touching the excellence of our friend's rods, how the angler's patron saint would have gloried in the possession of one! Every one of them was a work of art; the maker took as much care in the selection of the wood, in the balancing of the different parts, the varnishing and fitting, as though he were trying to emulate Stradivari with his violins. He had made violins, too, in his youth; the probability is that had he continued at them he would have come out among the noted Scottish makers; but his sporting tastes drew him into the gun and fishing tackle

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

business, and monopolised his time and abilities. As it is, his work is the prized possession of innumerable patrons scattered all over the world.

OUR WORTHY OLD FRIEND

was a keen politician, a great Radical, with clear, well-defined views about all public questions. The South Free Church, Blairgowrie, was his home in religious matters, but he was ruled by charity rather than dogma in all his thoughts and actions affecting others. Possessed of a splendid constitution, he enjoyed the best of health throughout a long life till near the close. The death of old Doctor Lunan, his life-long friend, was a great blow to him; the spirit of the warrior seemed broken, and he declared himself that he would not be long in following. As a matter of fact, he had a serious illness shortly thereafter, managing to pull through with difficulty; but was overtaken at last by the sure-footed and insatiable hunter of men on the 12th October 1896, in his 79th year.

JAMES MACFARLANE.



Mr James MacFarlane

BLAIRGOWRIE POSTMAN.

XLIV.

JAMES MACFARLANE, BLAIRGOWRIE POSTMAN.

Something like a break in the continuity of things postal seemed to take place in the retiral of Mr Macfarlane a few years ago. He was succeeded, there is no doubt, by thoroughly competent men, but they belong to another generation, have been trained in another school, and will turn out individuals of a very different type from our friend. "Jamie the Post" was an institution, and one which the public grudged to give up—a feeling with which there is good reason for believing our friend himself thoroughly sympathised. But fate, in the form of the Postmaster-General, was too much for him, and he had to submit to enforced idleness after 32 years' faithful service. His retiral may be said to have closed the record of the old school, even though it is recognised that he saw the telegraph and other improvements introduced in his time. Doubtless he considers himself now well out of the rush of modern methods; for, what with telephones and phonographs and Marconi's "wireless telegraphy," we are going the pace in fine style. Dealing with simple postal affairs—it has not yet been ascertained when the first service was started for the district; but when we recall that even so late as 1760 one carrier was considered sufficient for the delivery of the whole of the letters in Edinburgh, and that the mail bag from London would

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

sometimes arrive in the Scottish capital with only one letter in it ; also, that news was so scarce and travelled so slowly that ministers were known to

OFFER UP SUPPLICATIONS

for the King's long life and health some considerable time after His Majesty had been buried, we may safely conclude that in the "City of Rest and be Thankful," on the banks of the Ericht, letter-carrying was not in a very brisk condition. We find, however, that about the beginning of last century there was a post office in a small shop which stood where Mr Whitehead's place of business is now ; and the first postman of which there is any record was one James Peters, who was born in 1766 and died in 1860. In our friend's early days as postman the said shop was carried on by Miss Easson, and business was so slack at times that the postmistress would lock the door and retire upstairs to the dwelling-house. The staff consisted of the postmistress, an assistant during the despatch of mails, and the following letter-carriers : — For Blairgowrie, Allan Heron ; Rattray, Peter Young ; Forneth, John Dunbar ; and Rosemount, William Chalmers. All these, with the exception of the respected postmistress (now Mrs Mungo Clark), have joined the great majority ; and it was the fate of Mr Macfarlane to see the officers changed three or four times during his term of service. He was born in Blairgowrie on the 26th October 1847, two days after the fall of the Brig o' Blair as the result of a great spate. He attended school under the late John Inch, father of the Rev. A. S. Inch of Dumbarton. After a few years' stay with an uncle at Moneydie he returned to his native place, and was three or four years with the late Mr Campbell, bookseller, and afterwards with his

James Macfarlane, Blairgowrie.

widow, at the corner of Reform Street. A couple of years were next passed as waiter with that ideal host, the late Mr Macdonald of the Queen's Hotel, during which time he had the honour of waiting upon many celebrities when the "Royal route" to Balmoral was patronised by the Queen and, consequently, by everybody that was anybody. In 1867 he entered upon Post Office duties, succeeding Heron for Blairgowrie, and no form has been more familiar to a full generation of Blair folks than that of "Macfarlane James the Post" on his daily rounds. At that time there were two deliveries, one at 7 and the other at 11 A.M. ; now,

BEHOLD THE MARCH OF PROGRESS,

we have a delivery at 7.45 A.M., and another at 6.10 P.M., with a parcel delivery at 10 A.M.—one delivery more (parcels) for 35 years ! The daily average of letters for Blairgowrie and Rattray was then about 1100 ; now, exclusive of parcels, it amounts to about 4000. In 1867 the delivery extended only to the Dunkeld Road on the west, there being no house except the Beeches beyond that point ; and on the north-west there was no building except Viewfield and the South Free Manse. The only stamps in use were the familiar "Queen's head" (1d), twopenny, and six-penny stamps. Halfpenny stamps came later on. Special uniforms were unthought of, and every postman pleased himself. John Dunbar was considered the dandy of the service, and used to sport a long black surtout and a tall, amply-proportioned "tile" with great effect. James himself was once the recipient of a gorgeous uniform from the town ; but, although he was very careful with the town's property, the clothes did wear done, and as there was no sign of another suit from the same quarter, he had to resume his

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

own humble habiliments. By and by, however, the Post Office authorities saw to the cleaving of their servants in the present garb. The Post Office itself was removed from the High Street to Allan Street (in the shop now occupied by a shoemaker), then back to the High Street (the shop occupied by a stationer); finally, along to "The Cross," where it now is, in the premises known formerly as "No. 1 High Street." Miss M'Hardy—who retired about three years ago—was Postmistress in the last three places, and was preceded in Allan Street by the late James Forbes, and succeeded by Mr Kinnear, the present Postmaster. With 1870 came the introduction of the telegraph—1s for 12 words, address free. Our friend had the privilege of sending off

THE FIRST WIRE FROM BLAIRGOWRIE.

Not long after this the halfpenny post was introduced, and the burdens of the officials increased apace. Then followed the Savings Bank, book post, sample post, postal orders, investments, insurance for compensation, saving of school-pence, reduction of rates and increase of weights, telegraph money orders, free re-direction of letters, &c., until, probably, the Post Office official's lot is not a happy one at times. And still the public cry for more. Our friend himself hopes to see a universal penny postage yet, and it will certainly not be the fault of Mr Henniker Heaton, M.P., if this is not achieved. In his day, as might be supposed, our veteran postman has seen and heard much in his daily travels. He is a staunch Liberal, and amongst the liveliest of his recollections is the great fight in 1868 between C. S. Parker and Sir William Stirling Maxwell, who had sat for Perthshire for 16 years unopposed. There were two polling

James Macfarlane, Blairgowrie.

booths—one at Mr Douglas's shop, Perth Street, and the other in the Town Hall. Parker got in with a majority of 279, and the announcement of the figures from the Queen's Hotel window by the late Mr David Grimond was something to remember. Probably another outstanding event was the excitement connected with the memorable "handshaking incident," which arose out of Mr Gladstone's attendance at worship in one of the churches in Blairgowrie while residing as the guest of Mr Armitstead at Blackcraig in the autumn of 1893. But that is another story: so is the incident connected with a certain notable picture which was on exhibition in Glasgow in 1895, and which our friend and another gentleman did *not* go to see, but greatly preferred to inspect a nice picture of sheep and lambs in a shop window instead. Of

AMUSING REMINISCENCES

he tells of a communication having been addressed to a provincial postmaster as follows:—"Dear Sir,—May I ask you to be good enough to let one of your carriers take enclosed postcard to my nephew? He is a young man, I believe, well known in your town, but whose address I forget. He walks lame, owing to a cork leg, and has also a bright, projecting set of teeth. I think he is an assistant or manager at one of your best jeweller's. Hoping this will not trouble you too much,—I am," &c. The town this was sent to contained a population of 72,000, but the cork-legged and bright-projecting-teethed individual was duly identified. Another story of his is about a well-known bookseller in Blairgowrie, long since gone to his rest. The postman to him was seldom a *persona grata*, for he was too often the bearer of some obnoxious bill. If he saw that

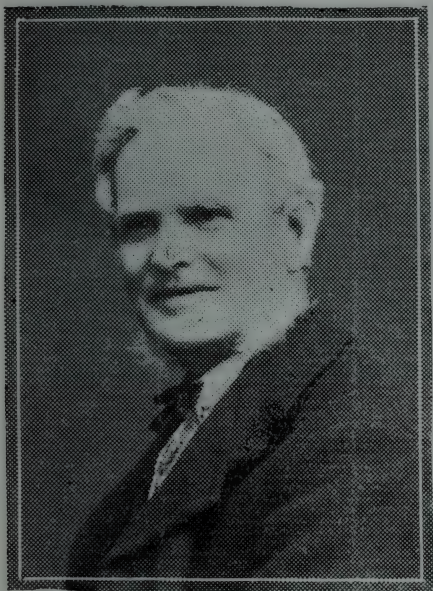
Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

public official approaching he prayed hard, and if his prayer was answered and posty skipped his door, he would exclaim with great gusto—"Thank goodness, the post's past! Another day's grace!" Like another merchant who was similarly plagued, he used to declare that if anyone wished time to pass quickly he should sign a bill. One day, time being up for one, he felt so intensely relieved at the postman's passing on without depositing anything that he went out to the hotel, and treated himself to a dram. Somehow the letter had been mis-delivered; but when the postman called with it in the afternoon, it did not matter very much, for our friend by this time was glorious and

O'er a' the ills of life victorious!

It is not amiss to mention that Mr Macfarlane's brother, Alexander, was Assistant Professor of Mathematics in Edinburgh University, 1879-1881, and in 1885 was appointed Professor of Physics in the University of Texas, U.S.A., and is now Lecturer in Lehigh University, Pennsylvania. Another brother, William, was reporter to the *Blairgowrie Advertiser* and the *Dundee Advertiser*; went to London, and afterwards to China, where he ran a newspaper, and regarding which he wrote a book. He died at Portsmouth. James himself was local correspondent to the *Dundee Advertiser* for five years. On the completion of 25 years' service he was presented with a marble timepiece and a purse of sovereigns. He retired in 1899, the proud wearer of five long service and good conduct stripes, and with the hearty wish of the whole community that he might live many years to enjoy the repose to which his long and faithful services entitled him.

**WILLIAM DAVIE,
BLAIRGOWRIE AND DUNKELD.**



LOCAL HISTORIAN AND ALTRUIST.

XLV.

WILLIAM DAVIE,

BLAIRGOWRIE AND DUNKELD.

Among the curiosities of human nature to the reflective mind must always be reckoned patriotism. To many people the suggestion may be the only curious thing about it; but when one considers the supreme exaltation over every other nation which each nation makes of its own particular allotment on the earth's surface, and how every man has a weakness for believing in his heart that his own native parish or village or county is the finest in existence, and is always the dearest, there is sufficient matter to give one pause, since it is manifest that all cannot be right. Early associations doubtless count for much in the explanation; there be those, however, who are inclined to think that physical causes of a less elusive character count for more. The mere fact, they argue, that this "too solid flesh" has to subsist on the products of the soil, vegetable and animal, cannot but bind us to the particular spot we fondly designate "home" in a manner as indissoluble as it is inevitable; and all the spirit and beauty of our native land blossom and breathe through its children as truly as through its fields of waving grain, its storm-tossed forests, its leaping waters, its heather-clad hills. We are "one with nature" indeed because we cannot help ourselves, and patriotism is as much a matter of birth and breeding as filial affection. The subject cannot be pursued here, however

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies :

interesting, but is suggested on taking up the consideration of the

OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS

of our friend the late Mr Davie; than whom no one ever had a more intense love for his place of birth and everything and everybody connected with it. He was born in Blairgowrie, where his father was an ironmonger, in 1832; served his apprenticeship in the shop, and afterwards proceeded to Kilmarnock and Dundee in order to acquire additional experience before returning to Blair and succeeding his father in the business. To this he added the seed trade, and wrought the whole up to be one of the most prosperous in the county, our friend being always in the van of progress and improvement. Amongst other things, he was one of the first to recognise the advantage of having different colours of paints put up in small quantities, and had paraffin lamps on sale before any one else so far north. Over 20 years ago, after a long spell of close application to business, he retired; built a handsome villa for himself at Dunkeld, and there resided for the greater part of the year—never, however, slackening the ties of affection and memory which bound him to Blair. Only a week before his death he had been making a round of visits in his native place.

Intellectually, Mr Davie was of a keen, inquiring turn of mind, more particularly for science in his early life. Back in the early fifties, when he was one of the old

LEADING LIGHTS

of Blairgowrie Mechanics' Institute—Bailie Steven is the last now remaining—he read a very ingenious paper entitled “A Trip from the Earth to Venus,” in which he not only showed great familiarity with the views of the time regarding

William Davie.

electricity, astronomy, &c., but advanced certain theories of his own in respect to the question of the inhabitation of Venus, the relation of electricity and ether to the vital forces, and other matters of curious interest. He was the last of those who had attended the early meetings of Blairgowrie and Rattray Y.M.C.A. in 1848, and always kept up his connection with that body. He was also a member of the old "First Free," Blairgowrie (St Andrew's U.F. now), from the beginning, in 1843, and never ceased to take an active interest in its welfare.

He had many hobbies—including the violin, gardening, photography, &c.—but there was none of them yielded such delight as dabbling in local history, and in that line he came to be recognised as

THE CHIEF AUTHORITY

in all matters pertaining to the district. He wielded a facile pen, and a good deal of his work saw daylight, but very much more was held back, our friend being one of the most modest of men, and one of the most generous with his material. The present writer has had to acknowledge his indebtedness to him on more than one occasion, and every one taking any interest in local history has the same tale to tell. Nothing came amiss to him, and his well-stored and retentive memory never failed to respond to the most exacting demands made upon it. From the Roman invasion and the much debated battle of Mons Grampius down to the removal of some old signboard; from the true signification of the "Druidical stones" down to the shape of Post Reid's hat, it was all the same; he seemed to have gleaned all there was to know on the subject. Was it a question of the authenticity of an anecdote? a date to be

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

settled? a genealogy? some old custom or tradition? the configuration of Blair in old times?

“ASK MR DAVIE!”

and ten to one satisfaction would be the result. An evening's “crack” with him at his social hearth, when, say, the “old Fair o' Blair” and the “characters” of his boyhood were the theme, his features aglow as he laid the matter off in great style, was an experience never to be forgotten, and never to be enjoyed by the present generation again. Other *laudatores temporis acti* remain, other local historians, but there was only one William Davie. He could turn out very good verse also on occasions, generally with local themes of a humorous character; he even attempted musical composition, a number of song and dance melodies remaining to his credit.

In passing, it may be noted that Mr Davie was a man of very handsome features, with forehead high and broad, rather bushy eyebrows over deep-set, bright, and penetrating eyes, never without a humorous twinkle within their depths; well-formed nose; mouth always on smile; chin full and inclined to dimple—a kindly, attractive face, one that claimed the beholder's allegiance at once. His voice and manner were in perfect keeping with it; there was a certain old-world flavour about his never-failing courtesy to friends that was as rare as it was charming.

Touching his connection with public affairs, there is, of course, in the very forefront of consideration the vexed question of

THE DAVIE PARK,

gifted to the burghs of Blairgowrie and Rattray in 1887 by Mr Davie and his sister, Mrs Nicoll. Mr Davie's express wish and understanding was that his gift of the 11-acre field

William Davie.

should be added to by the purchase of an adjoining one of 9 acres, upon which he had obtained an "option" at a low figure; but the scheme fell through owing to the mismanagement of the Committee, and the donor handed his gift over to the two Provosts for the time being and Mr J. B. Miller, solicitor, as trustees, till such time as the "Park" should bring in funds as an arable property sufficient to wall it in, lay it out, &c.

The only return Mr Davie got was a plentiful supply of abuse for not doing more. There is a stirring of the waters at present which almost seems to augur the throwing open of the Park to the public at an early date. His

HANDSOME DONATIONS

(£1000) to Blairgowrie and District Cottage Hospital, an institution in which he took great interest; his bequest of £1000 for a mortuary; his donations to St Andrew's U.F. Church, Blairgowrie; to the U.F. Church, Dunkeld, &c., are well known; and his private benefactions were equally creditable to the goodness of his heart.

The last occasion on which the writer visited Mr Davie at Dunkeld was a few weeks before his death. It was a day which the deceased gentleman devoted to his friends' service with that whole-heartedness which characterised everything he did. Before making a start for the railway station the writer tendered his thanks for all his kindness and apologies for monopolising so much of his time. The reply he made will always remain a memorable one.

"Don't mention it, don't mention it," he exclaimed, lying back in his chair with a short laugh, and spreading his hands abroad; "I don't think there's another man who lives a more altruistic life than I do. I am entirely at the service of my friends."

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

The words were uttered simply and unaffectedly, and, difficult though they were, became no one better than our old friend.

IT WAS ONLY FITTING

that such a man who, as was truly said of him after his death, was exceptional in wearing " ' the white flower of a blameless life ' amid the fierce light which beats on those who dwell among their own people in a small country town," that his end should be peaceful. And so it was. It came suddenly on Sunday night, 12th October last, in the midst of a few friends who had come to pass the evening with him. The following expressive lines, written by Mr Davie's life-long friend, Bailie Steven, fittingly close this brief appreciation of a very worthy Christian gentleman :—

True friend and brother, worthy of a place
In our remembrance through the coming years,
Loyal to truth and duty 'mong thy peers;
Warm-hearted, generous in blame or praise,
Accepting life, weightied with hopes and fears,
Wearing aspect benign through cloudy days,
As God's good gift; living as one who hears
A voice from the unseen 'mid life's perplexing maze;

Gone from our sight with no word of farewell,
To linger over as we think of thee,
And that is sad for some who loved thee well
And prize last words of thine in memory
Of vanished years and old-time friendship's spell;
This hope remains—" What was, again may be."

And still we think of thee as gone away
On some kind errand just as heretofore;
Welcome wert thou at many a friendly door,
And in kind converse would prolong thy stay.
Why should it happen otherwise to-day?
God's sunshine floods the landscape as of yore,
In ordered sequence life goes as before,
And thy old friends remain as yesterday.

Still, God's hand holds thee, and the vacant chair
Awaits thy coming as an honoured guest,
Where thou may'st take thy place among the rest,
And all the household love and goodness share,
And be to those who knew and loved thee best,
An ever-welcome unseen Presence there.

Bailie LOW,

BLAIRGOWRIE.



Ex Bailie Low.

MERCHANT OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

XLVI.

Bailie LOW,

BLAIRGOWRIE.

In last article Mr Davie was our theme: in this it seems only fitting that our friend, Bailie Low, who departed life on Feb. 19, 1903, should be introduced to the reader. Both men had much in common—particularly in their strong attachment to their native place, and constant interest in local affairs, men and things, past and present; also in their leaning towards the bizarre and humorous in character, and in their well-stored memories of fact and fiction from the quaint days of yore. In Mr Davie's case, however, there was superadded the gift of the pen, which the Bailie—he never got anything else—neither possessed nor had any desire to possess. He was born at the Muirton of Ardblair, near Blairgowrie, in 1828—his father, Joseph Low, having been also a native of the same old-fashioned clachan, and breathing his last in the same bield he was born in. His grandfather came from the Dunkeld district. Young Thomas received his schooling at Blairgowrie; served his time as tailor with the late Mr Slater; and by and by started business in a humble way about 54 years ago. He was thus

THE OLDEST SHOPKEEPER

in the town, and left no one behind him with the same record. Mr James Ogilvy, brewer,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

comes nearest. He took great interest in public affairs, served nine years on Police Commission and Town Council, in which body, as well as on the old Baronial Town Council, he held the dignity of Bailie. He was also many years a valued member of the old Parochial Board and the Parish Council, as well as of the Water Commission. In the work connected with each of these bodies he put the very best that honest, ungrudging endeavour was capable of. His kindly disposition found congenial occupation also in furthering the interests of the Cottage Home—an institution for aged poor people which he had much to do in getting set agoing.

To know this genial old man intimately was to live over and over again the days of "Old Blair" without the necessity of putting on so many careful years as he had. Not scatheless altogether from his own share of life's worries, they had dealt lightly on the whole with his buoyant nature, and up to the very last touch of outward things he had the spirit of a boy. His tastes were of the simplest kind; the open air, a turn down the riverside or through the Muir of Blair, round the golf course, or through Carsie Woods was exactly to his mind; in company with a congenial companion or two, the pleasure was enhanced; but he always found the

BEST OF GOOD COMPANY

in himself when occasion arose. He was very fond of draughts playing at one period, during the dark nights, but dreaded winter at all times. One of his favourite speculations was aeronautics—regarding which Andree, Maxim, and all the rest of them were "a' wrang, an' a'thigether a' wrang"—and he was wont to declare that when that "balloon" of his was

Bailie Low, Blairgowrie.

perfected—in imagination it always was—he would take up his winter quarters regularly in the centre of Africa or other congenial climate. Another hobby of his took a mechanical turn. He effected several improvements on the sewing machine, but never patented them. He had a great notion to improve the common shirt and trouser buttons—to devise some simple means which would enable their being affixed without sewing, without injuring the material, and give a good “shank,” &c. He used to carry about a varied dozen or so of his “own make,” and was always ready to demonstrate their superiority against all-comers. His acquaintances exhibited commendable faith in the invention by wearing the efforts of his skill occasionally. Of all the weaknesses he was ready to confess to, chief, perhaps, was to lie basking under a summer sun on a muir

AMONG THE HEATHER,

watching the clouds sail past, as lazy as himself; counting the calls of the distant cuckoo with as much relish as the King in his chamber over his money; or recalling in his own quiet, pawky style the days of auld langsyne. That reference to the cuckoo recalls many things about our friend. One June day three of us lay on a certain hillside luxuriating among the bell heather. During the day a cuckoo had been calling at intervals from a copse near the foot of the hill, but no special notice of it had been taken, although its persuasive notes completed the ideal character of the time and place. Two of us were stretched at full length amongst the fragrant bloom, the Bailie sitting upright, bareheaded, beaming, and blissful; not a word had been spoken for some minutes, when by one of those fortuitous concurrences we hear of so frequently—without the slightest premedi-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

tation or arrangement whatever, at the very first note, the Bailie started to

COUNT THE CALLS

as they reached us. "Cuckoo!" — "One!" "Cuckoo!" — "Two!" "Cuckoo!" — "Three!" "Cuckoo!" — "Four!" "Cuckoo!" — "Five!" — our friend's head at each count wagging in the most solemn manner imaginable, for all the world like a Chinaman in a tea-shop window—up to "Cuckoo!" — "Eighteen!" when the situation proved too much for the rest of the party, and a violent explosion of uncontrollable laughter broke in upon the duet. When we recovered the cuckoo was still at it. The following year at the same spot the same party spent a pleasant day: not a note of the "sacred bird" had been heard, however, and on coming away the fact was just being remarked upon when, all at once, came the familiar call, and never dogs stood firmer to "point" than the three friends, with ears a-cock, counting the number of calls. These reached the record, twenty-one—three more than the previous year's—without a break; and after the last one a simultaneous shout was set up that made the hills ring again. Well, well;

I could lie down in the summer grass
Content, and in the round of my fond arm
Enclose enough dominion, and all day
Do tender descant, owning one by one
Floweret and flower.

Thus says the poet, and thus the mood of some of us. The Bailie was not only one of the most good-natured of men—his imperturbability was almost irritating at times—but one of the most humorous. Although he was

NEVER KNOWN TO LAUGH,

his smile and suppressed chuckle were a thou-

Bailie Low, Blairgowrie.

sand-fold more expressive and infectious than any laughter. Then he had so much to tell. He could recall as many as sixteen looms going at the Muirton, where he was born. He could remember when St Ringan's Well trickled through the Wellmeadow. He used to relate how he was awakened at the dead of night during the Crimean War by the sound of a horseman at full gallop through the streets—Tennyson refers to the incident—and remarking next morning it was probably a courier speeding on his way to the Queen at Balmoral—as it turned out was the case—with the news of the fall of Sebastopol. He recalled with great gusto having

MET THE LATE QUEEN

and Prince Albert at a lonely part of the Bridge of Cally road while they were en route for Balmoral and getting a special salute all to himself. He could describe, like Mr Davie, the old Fair o' Blair to perfection, the enormous range of "sweetie" stands, &c., right up from the Wellmeadow to Brown Street and further west; the droves of cattle up the Boatbrae and Gasbrae and in the centre of the Wellmeadow; the busy whisky tents; the cheap-jacks; the conjurers; the half-crowns-in-the-purse-man; the street musicians; above all, the humanity everywhere—the real live, hearty honest men and women, lads and lasses; noisy, unconventional, but thoroughly good to see, and pleasant to recall in after years. He

COULD NAME ALL THE ALTERATIONS

which had taken place in Allan Street and the Wellmeadow, out the Perth Road, and indeed anywhere; could tick off the tenants—generations of them in some instances—in the

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

numerous shops about the town; and was a veritable vocable and gossipy "Who's Who" for all the old "characters" of the district. With all, never in his comments upon men and things, present or past, was heard the ill-natured word, the innuendo, the back-stroke. Let charity prevail was his unspoken motto, and the philosophy of his life was to move in quiet ways, performing the duties of life to the best of his ability without fuss or ostentation, and leaving others to find their guide of action where he found his—in their own consciences.

ALAN REID.



MR. ALAN REID. F.R.S.

POET, MUSICIAN, ANTIQUARY.



THE LOANING—MR REID'S EDINBURGH HOME.

XLVII.

ALAN REID,

POET, MUSICIAN, ANTIQUARY.

The subject of our sketch was born in Arbroath just half a century ago, but it is many a year since he found his way to the metropolis, there to settle down and become one of the busiest of professional men. His career is another good instance of the "self-help" order: "From telegraph boy to Edinburgh's premier school music teacher and composer"—not to mention much more to his credit—would suit exactly as heading to a chapter in some of Sir Samuel Smiles' books.

While he was quite an infant, our friend's parents removed to Forfar, and it is with the Royal burgh—of which he has published a worthy history—that his childhood and youth were connected. After the lad had received what was regarded as a fair education at the Burgh School, his father died, and a friend of the family got young Alan a situation as telegraph boy in Montrose. But a taste for constructive work early exhibiting itself, he returned to Forfar when fourteen years old to learn the cabinetmaker's business. Woodwork, however, was not sufficient to satisfy his active mind, and every spare moment was devoted to self-instruction and the construction of working

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

models of engines and other mechanical ingenuities. As if these were not enough, he wooed successfully the three sisters divine of music, painting, and poetry—his efforts in the last connection appearing in the local newspapers, greatly to the gratification of the youthful scribbler. Probably the most potent factor in his career was becoming a member of the church choir. In the sphere of music his

ABILITIES

were soon recognised as of such superior order that when quite a youth he was appointed precentor in the Parish Church of Aberlemno, a position he afterwards filled in the Free Church there for a couple of years. The Free Church of Carnoustie next claimed his services, and another couple of years were spent in that thriving seaside resort. Here his devotion to work made an impression upon the community which was felt long after he had left the district. The attractions of Modern Athens—musical, literary, and artistic—proving irresistible, he had the pleasure of receiving a choirmastership in the Barclay Church there.

He was now completely in his element, and his rare qualifications as a choir trainer and teacher of music among children were further recognised by his being appointed teacher under the School Board, a position he has held now, with ever-growing success, for many years. He is exceptionally gifted for the training and management of large masses of children, a typical instance of which was the floral fete in connection with the Coronation last year. One of the most attractive items in the programme was the performance, seven days in succession, of one of his own operettas—"The

Alan Reid, Edinburgh.

Red, White, and Blue"—in the open at Murrayfield, the children answering to the baton in perfect style. Another illustration of his neat methodical work is the training of two classes of 500 each, juniors and seniors respectively, in connection with St Cuthbert's Co-Operative Association, his plan being to meet both classes in succession on the same night weekly during winter—most exhausting work to any one but the most tactful and good-natured individual going—finishing up in the spring with two grand demonstrations in the Music Hall. The ease and precision with which the great body of singers is manipulated has often been

THE SUBJECT OF ADMIRATION,

not to say wonder; but apparently it is simply second nature with the popular conductor. Training choirs, however, is only part of the musical work in which he has distinguished himself. He is the composer and compiler of quite a long list of school songs, operettas, and works on musical theory. No one has done more for school music than our friend. He has also written several musical lectures, among these the racy librettos so well known in the entertainments given by his friend, Mr Durward Lely. Then, as historian and antiquarian, his busy pen has produced a number of volumes, each one of which is a standard in its respective sphere. These include a history of Inchcolm Abbey; a history of Rosyth Castle; a Guide to Paisley and Surrounding District; "Limekilns, Charlestown, and Broomhall;" "The Bards of Angus and the Mearns," a notable book; and his latest effort, "The Royal Burgh of Forfar," a splendid volume of some 460 pages, consti-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

tuting the first real history ever written of the County Town. But even this goodly array does not complete the list, for there is "Howetoon; Records and Recollections of a Scottish Village"—a series of sketches which met with unanimous approbation by the press. To his other accomplishments has to be added skilful draughtsmanship, and not a few of the foregoing volumes are enhanced with clever illustrations by the author. Finally—just for the moment, however, as it is understood he has a "History of the Scottish Precentor," "The Bards of Fife and Kinross," and probably a number of other irons in the fire—there falls to be noted his couthie book of poems, "Sangs o' the Heatherland," published in 1894, and received into the good graces of the press and public right away. It is a charming little book, between the boards of which are numerous liltis in natural, unaffected vein—love, home, and open air being the principal themes of a collection of poems which are among the best of our minor Scots poetry.

Mr Reid is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, as well as a Fellow of the Educational Institute of Scotland, and an active fellow he is, too, as his published works testify, and as his friends know. As might be inferred, he is in touch with all that is best in the literary and musical world in Auld Reekie—as well as all over the country.

THE LATE PROFESSOR BLACKIE,

with his perfervid love of Scots music, his fondness for children, and his admiration for clever work, held Mr Reid in highest esteem. Probably the most prized volumes in our friend's library are a complete set of the genial

Alan Reid, Edinburgh.

Professor's works, each liberally inscribed to him. The old Trojan used to find great delight in coming to see Mr Reid at his work, and occasionally he would consent to "sing" his "Jenny Geddes" for the amusement of the children. The word "amusement" has to be taken with some qualification, however, for at the words,

"No, no," she said, and at his head
She flung the four-legged stool!

it was his habit to snatch up a bundle of books and fling them at the children. It was a sight to behold the way in which the children would watch the swift action of the jolly old fellow, then scatter right and left as the books came flying amongst them. No one enjoyed the business better than himself—striking the floor with his stick, and exclaiming, "Good fun! Good fun!" *con amore*, before he proceeded with the rest of the song. Some thirty letters of his to Mr Reid are further evidence of the great respect he had for him. But that is natural to everyone who has the pleasure of even a mere passing acquaintanceship; while to those who have studied the man and the admirable work he is doing, and are on intimate terms with him, the feeling is one of pride and gratitude that our country can boast men with such aims and ideals as his, and with such ability and devotion to carry them out.

The following poem is certainly one of Mr Reid's happiest efforts:—

THE HEATHER DINGS THEM A'.

There's rowth o' praise for gaudy blooms
In gairdens far and near,
But isna Scotia's heatherbell
The glory o' the year?

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

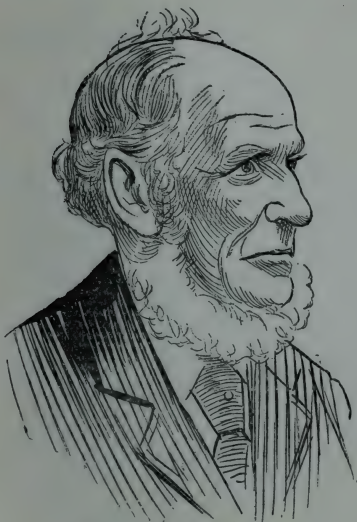
In hardy grandeur, see it hap
The mountain and the shaw—
'Mang gems that deck fair Nature's face
The heather dings them a'.

The burnie bickers doon the glen,
And saft the sang it sings;
It's a' about the heatherbell,
Wha's partin' kiss it brings.
There's gayer forms and brichter hues,
But this chaste floorie sma'
Will haud its ain whaur they would fail—
The heather dings them a'!

Amang its shade the fairies play,
The birdies lo'e its bield;
And flichtest beasties, sairly press'd,
Find in it's hap a shield.
It's bonnie aye—but, oh, it's grand
Whan hairst time comes awa',
It's royal tints croon our auld hills—
The heather dings them a'!

Ring, bonnie bells, sweet heatherbells,
Ring oot your blithest strain;
An' waft the sang to leal Scotch hearts
In far isles o' the main.
There's mony there that mind ye weel,
Sae bonnie, aye, and braw;
We'll sing your praise owre a' the lave—
The heather dings them a'!

Bailie CLARK,
BLAIRGOWRIE.



BAILIE CLARK

MAN OF INDEPENDENT MIND.

XLVIII.

Bailie CLARK,

BLAIRGOWRIE.

Bailie Clark is one of the most notable men in Blairgowrie, although he would be the first to deny it—with emphasis. Regarded simply as a servant of the public, he has many claims to recognition. Born at Forneth, five miles from Blairgowrie, in the year 1836, and learning the tailoring trade there under his father, it is over thirty years since he settled down in the city of “Rest and be thankful,” which in his case, at least, has not belied its reputation, so far as thankfulness is concerned, although one is not so sure about the “rest”—the Bailie treating himself much as he used to treat the tramps that came before him, with an everlasting “move on!” For the whole of the period named—and, in some memorable ways, even in his native village long before that—he has been more or less before the public—as politician, man of business, Town Councillor, &c., and he is now the oldest unpaid public servant the town possesses. On the old Parochial Board and new Parish Council he has served over twenty years; as Police Commissioner and Town Councillor he has put in some fifteen

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

years' service, three of which were as Bailie; and on the Water Committee also he has

A LONG AND EXCELLENT RECORD.

As a Radical of the most pronounced type, he has borne his share of the fighting in all the great political contests which the county has seen in his time, and recalls with infinite satisfaction—his active snuff-mull being one of the outward manifestations thereof—the many thorough lickings which his friends the Tories have had to submit to—the latest being the unopposed return of Mr T. R. Buchanan as M.P. for East Perthshire. He is also a keen curler and an equally enthusiastic bowler, and, as a special hobby has his bees to attend to. Some lively experiences he has had, too, on occasions in this last connection, one of which was when an inquisitive bee got into his ear and had to be comatosed by means of a drop or two of Dewar's extra special before it was got rid of.

But, after all, it is not so much the amount of the work the Bailie has done as the character he has exhibited in the doing of it that has given him his position in public estimation. He is beyond all question the most uncompromising man of duty Blairgowrie can boast of. Once he has made up his mind on any matter—and in most cases it is the right mind—nothing on earth will shunt him from the straight course he has chalked out for himself—self-interest, popularity, private friendships all go if necessary. Bailie Clark and destiny are

SYNONYMOUS TERMS :

as well try to alter the one as the other. Witness his action when the extension of the water district was being discussed—how he took the unpopular side—to include Roselea—knowing

Bailie Clark, Blairgowrie.

that the proposal if carried out, which it was, would increase his own rates as a proprietor and tenant. Witness his action again when the paving question out to Falcon House was the sore point. Once more he threw his weight into the unpopular side against his own private interests. Witness the water question, when, with a heroism as rare as admirable, he undertook the thankless duty of proposing the deposition of one of his own intimate friends from high office in favour of another—probably about the most trying bit of work the inexorable Bailie ever performed. Witness once more his position with respect to the Wellmeadow question. It is hardly necessary to say that as one of the chief advocates of the “Coronation Avenue,” he was in very bad odour with the people, who hoped to recover and retain everlasting youth by means of the

SHOWS AND SWEETIE STANDS

of the Fair o’ Blair. He didn’t get his way that time, however, although that counts for little with the Bailie; and it was one of the most amusing incidents in connection with this agitation when, at the election of a Bailie by the Town Council, he allowed himself to be nominated for the post with the dead certainty that he would be ignominiously rejected by the Wellmeadow party—simply that these might not be able to say that they had no other name before them but that of the man of their own way of thinking.

It is hardly any wonder that he is the most respected and most detested man in Blairgowrie, and if ever there was an adept at the gentle art of making enemies, it is the Bailie. He is a thorough believer with Josh Billings

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

that although "honesty is the best policy," he who is honest on policy is not an honest man; and there is only one individual that our friend can tolerate, and that is the man who has decided views regarding things, and can stick to them. The views may be the antithesis of the Bailie's, but he cannot withhold his respect for his opponent's honesty, although he may label him silently as a "peer thing" for his lack of judgment. The knock-kneed and the invertebrate among men he cannot abide at all; they are "anathema maranatha" to him, a burden to themselves, and a plague to all progress and order in the community. If one asks the reason of the Bailie's unpopularity with a certain section of the public it is certainly not far to seek. That proverbially unruly member, the tongue, has much to do with it; there is not another man who can display a

MORE CAUSTIC WIT OR MORE IRONICAL MANNER

than he on occasions, and men do not care to be spitted and basted and roasted in public for the entertainment of others. Even the worm will turn, we are told, and so it does in Blair sometimes. One can see it squirming under his heel. His method is not the bludgeon, but rather the rapier, and he uses no button; only, it must be admitted, he forgets the courtesies of combat at times, and has even been accused of pinking a bound and unarmed opponent when moved by strong excitement.

It used to be a beautiful sight—a contest between the late Factor Panton and our friend. The latter would thrust the enemy through and through in a dozen several places, every one of them fatal, but without the slightest effect upon

Bailie Clark, Blairgowrie.

the invulnerable Factor, who might have been "air, thin air," for all that the Bailie's expert work showed upon him. There is a legend that the Factor was seen to wince once; but that wants authentication. One thing is certain, however, no one had a greater respect for the Bailie than that first-class judge of character himself—notwithstanding all he suffered, or was supposed to suffer, at his hands.

Touching his tenure of office as Bailie—it was a pronounced success. The only people who objected to his sentences while on the bench were the culprits sentenced, and, as they were in the minority, their opinions were ignored. So far as one can judge, the

BAILIE'S GUIDING PRINCIPLE

seemed to be—"The law was made for evil-doers; let them get the full benefit of it." Which they usually did; so that when a band of "tinkies," the story goes, coming from Coupar Angus, learned that the Bailie was on the bench, they deemed it wisest policy to change their route for Dunkeld. On another occasion, when a number of slides of local celebrities were being thrown on the screen at a public entertainment, the Bailie's familiar features were greeted by a wag with the exclamation—"Sixty days!" to the huge delight of the audience—and the grim satisfaction of the original, who was present.

Behind the counter, on the bowling green, or in any other private relation, the Bailie is one of the best of good fellows. His intelligent grip of affairs, local and Imperial; his political reminiscences and inexhaustible stores of racy anecdotes; and, let one haste to add, his in-

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

dispensable snuff-mull, make the time pass quickly and agreeably in his company. It is impossible to conceive the Bailie without his mull, and the number of people who "drop in" just to have a pinch is legion. It is well known that, like the rain and sunshine, which fall upon the evil and the good, the famous crooked horn is free to Tory and Radical alike. Probably its owner's most convenient method of classifying humanity—after those who vote Liberal and those who don't—is the snuffers and non-snuffers, but every one has to partake who has the privilege of the Bailie's acquaintance, and the verdict of every one who knows him and can appreciate a good and genuine thing when he finds it is, that the man is as good as his snuff, and that Æsop with his torch might have discovered the object of his search in a certain tailor's place of business in Leslie Street, had he only known of it.

TAM CRAMB,

WOLFHILL.



MR. T. Cramb

COUNTRY DANCING MASTER.

XLIX.

TAM CRAMB,

WOLFHILL.

Like many other old and interesting institutions, the itinerant dancing master, with all the sociality and merry-making which his coming always occasioned, is fast becoming a thing of the past. It is only now and again one hears of classes being taken up during the winter months in those outlying districts of Stormont and Strathmore with which we are more immediately concerned here—where in former times numerous “danceys,” as they were called, were wont to appear as regularly as the dark nights set in, get the use of a room in some cottage, or the schoolroom, or, best of all, some granary, and have a flourishing academy for initiation into all the mysteries of the poetry of motion in no time. Every little village or hamlet had also its own pet fiddler, and fiddlers in those days were of no account if they were not equally well up in dancing—which, in many cases, did not amount to much after all; for it must be confessed it was a toss up sometimes whether it was the fiddling or the dancing that they knew least about. But young people were not so very particular thirty or forty years ago, and the player who could command

A FEW STRATHSPEYS AND REELS,

with perhaps a country dance or two and a set of quadrilles and lancers thrown in, and could

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

always put plenty of good audible horse-hair and rosin into his playing, was quite equal to all the state balls likely to be held in the district. One does not require to be very old to recall a cluster of these worthies. There was "Dancey M'Donald," who came all the way from the Braes of Balquhadder and held classes regularly at Forneth, Butterstone, and elsewhere in the Stormont; John Cramb, of Kinclaven; "Dancey Donaldson," from the Murthly district—a quaint character, whose amusing style the late Tom Liston of Hallhole used to mimic so laughably; James Paton, from Murthly, one of the best all-round athletes, as well as one of the finest, most graceful dancers ever seen; and, not to extend the list, "Dancey M'Kenzie," of the Stormont, another character, who was understood to be as good at the poaching as the fiddling, and had the odd habit of carrying a ferret about with him, which was allowed to scamper all over his person. Its favourite position was beneath its owner's long beard, through which it would stick its head, very much to the surprise and alarm of strangers. One night, after some irritation, it took it into its little head to make its teeth meet in the fiddler's throat! There was a sudden cry of pain, and the vicious little animal was dashed to the ground, but not without taking the bit clean away with it. So much in passing. "Dancey Cramb," the subject of the present sketch, was one of the

BEST KNOWN AND APPRECIATED

of his class. He was a native of Wolfhill, about seven miles from Perth, and bred a slater. Early in life, however, he developed considerable ability as a fiddler, and by easy stages ultimately

Tam Cramb, Wolfhill.

graduated as a country dancing master, and was known and welcomed as such over a wide area for the matter of about 50 years. Some 40 years ago, when Donald Dinnie was making the pace for athletics and Nottman was the best step-dancer of the day, Tam used to appear at Highland gatherings and take honourable positions on the prize-list, not only for his dancing, but at throwing the hammer and putting the stone. His looks were greatly in his favour, being tall and well formed and graceful in action, with features that might fairly be called regular and handsome. A notable feature was his long, bushy, and well-groomed beard; and get him with his tall hat and best coat on, ready to start for some ball, and he had "quite a distingue appearance," as the penny novelette would put it. Indeed, he was taken frequently for a scion of a certain blue-blooded Perthshire family, the likeness being remarkable. Fiddling and dancing classes were somewhat scarce in the summer months, however, and although Highland gatherings counted for something, these were of dubious value, and Tam used to fill up spare time at his own trade and otherwise, for he was a handy fellow, who, according to old wives, could either "preach or ploo" when he cared. He was a book-canvasser for a time, and a very good one, too, being always well up as to the merits of the particular work he was pushing. For many years in his prime it was his habit to cross the Sidlaws to get a "hairst" in the Carse o' Gowrie. His long, lithe, and muscular figure bent to the work in fine style, and many a time it was his boast that he could cut, bind, and stook from 20 to 24 threaves in a ten hours day. He never went to "hairst," it may be certain, without his fiddle, and after supper every lawful

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

evening out it came, and in a trice the "merry harvesters" were

TRIPPING THE "LIGHT FANTASTIC TOE"

in ideal pastoral style, and kings might be blest, but "Tam was glorious." He wielded a light, supple, dexterous bow, and had caught something of Niel Gow's traditional style, particularly at the change from the strathspey to the reel, when he would raise himself from his seat and give an inspiriting "Hooch!" that lifted the dancers fairly off their feet--then a hurricane, till "every carline swat and reekit." Niel was before his day, but he was well acquainted with Duncan M'Kercher, the "Atholl Paganini." Tam, it may be mentioned, was a good judge of fiddles, and possessed several, a "Matthew Hardie"—the finest make Scotland has ever produced—being his favourite instrument. Our friend always showed to advantage in the social circle. His ready wit, caustic criticisms upon men and things, and his inexhaustible wallet of racy anecdotes made him a desirable companion on such occasions, quite apart from his musical ability; and if the glass went round with businesslike regularity Tam was the last man to interfere.

IN HIS PEREGRINATIONS

all over Perthshire he had come into contact with nearly every one worth knowing, but wealth and position were by no means necessary to a place in his favour. Here is a characteristic story of Tam's manner. One day he happened to drop into the Black Bull Inn, Perth, and found several of his Wolhill friends engaged in such a hot dispute with some townspeople that they were on the point of resorting to the argumentum baculinum. Taking in the

Tam Cramb, Wolfhill.

situation at a glance, the polite dancing master thus addressed the company:—"Excuse my interference, gentlemen, but I perceive this is all the result of a misunderstanding." "Hoo that?" exclaimed the strangers. "Oh, you see," explained Tam in his most velvety manner, "these friends of mine took you for gentlemen; and you, sirs, took them for a set of fools; and you're both wrong." The two sets of belligerents sat down to think the matter out, and cooled in the effort. Tam finished his course in his native village on the 22d March 1896, but he has

LEFT HIS MARK BEHIND

in a sort of accepted standard for what is excellent in fiddling and dancing, and in witty and pithy obiter dicta. "As Tam Cramb used to say!" is still heard in the district, and will be for many a year to come. Scores of picturesque and expressive nick-names which he administered on provocation, too—some having already descended from father to son—are likely to survive through many generations. His characteristics were well hit off a number of years ago—as Tam himself admitted—in the following verses by Robert Ford, another native of Wolfhill, and nothing seems better than to conclude this sketch with them.

FIDDLER TAM.

I wadna swap an oor at e'en,
An oor wi' Tam, my pawkie frien',
For oors wi' some I ken;
For months, indeed, wi' swaggerin' blades,
Wi' jimp as muckle in their heads
As ony ord'nar' hen.
Na, na! Gie me a man o' mind,
I carena what his lot;
I prize the mind abune the man,
The man abune the coat.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

'Tis mind, sirs, ye'll find, sirs,
That mak's a man o' worth;
'Tis havers, 'tis clavers,
Wi' jimp as ruckle in their heads
That Tam's a genius, nane says nay;
He'll dance or play a blithe Strathspey
Wi' ony brither Scot,
An' set him down and glibly mix
In history, poetry, politics,
Or ony crack ye'll vote.
He's slater, doctor, hatter, clerk,
He'll mak' or men' a shoe;
Auld wives declare, wi' solemn air,
That Tam can preach or ploo.
I dootna, an' couldna,
For little comes him wrang,
Though here, sirs, 'tis clear, sirs,
A crook comes in my sang.

There's naething faultless 'neath the sun,
In sea, or air, or in the grun',
An' Tam—e'en Tam—has ane.
I'm laith to say't, he lo'es the drink;
But gie the mutchkin stoup a clink,
Ye'll set his birse on en',
An' quick as thocht he's at your hip,
De'il tak' the first to tire,
An' I'se be ban', he'll no get Tam—
He'll never budge his chair.
Frae Monday to Sunday,
An' e'en a week to that,
But joke still, an' smoke still,
An' tipple at the maut.

Oh, had I mystic power a fouth
The power to kill that cursed drouth
Nae sap on earth can sloken,
Ye'd sune see Tam in rank and nicht
A gaucy, buirdly, mensefu' wicht
As e'er set fit in stockin';
For Nature has been kind to Tam—
She's lent him wit and grace,
A routhy, fine, weel-balanced mind,
An' eke a weel-faured face.
E'en wi' his faut, his love o' maut,
We lo'e the carlie weel;
By auld and young, 'tis aye the sang—
"Feth, Tam's nae ord'nar' chiel!"

DUNCAN M'KERCHER,
DUNKELD.



DUNCAN M'KERCHER

“ATHOLL PAGANINI.”

L.

DUNCAN M'KERCHER,

DUNKELD.

Although he can never fill the imagination so satisfyingly as our "famous Niel," Duncan M'Kercher possessed an individuality both as a man and a fiddler, which could attract the notice of even those who had been brought under the spell of his great predecessor, and which will preserve his name for many a year yet amongst lovers of good Scots dance music. There appears to be some doubt regarding the exact date and place of his birth; but about 1796, and at Inver, near Dunkeld—the birth-place of Niel Gow, Charles M'Intosh (father and son), and James M'Intosh—are generally accepted. Niel departed life in 1807, so that Duncan would be about 11 years of age at the time; and although there is no certainty as to the fact, it is generally supposed that the boy had some lessons from the veteran player. In any case, he must have heard him frequently, and his style in some particulars was modelled on Niel's. He was the last man in the world, all the same, to be satisfied with mere reflected lustre. Niel, doubtless, was good enough in his way; but if you wanted to hear the very best thing in Scotch playing the world ever produced, why, then, Duncan M'Kercher was the man who could supply it, and no other.

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

"Hooch ay," he would exclaim in his own Highland style, "Niel wass a fery good player, he was indeet, I'll not deny it; but Niel's deid, and there's one fiddler alive as goot, and maybe better, too!" Duncan may be regarded as

A SELF-TAUGHT MAN,

and as he grew up became known far and near for his playing, which, even though he was too much given to "blaw," was excellent of its kind. He was of no use as a slow air player; but at balls and social gatherings throughout the country, and at a time when the fiddle had not yet lost its supreme position at such functions, he was in great request. He also managed to form a good connection as a teacher, and counted among his patrons some of the best families in Perthshire and neighbouring counties. His fame even attracted the attention of that prince of entrepreneurs, Julian, who had secured Jamie Allan, of Forfar, for some of his tours, and Duncan had similar engagements as the "Atholl Paganini"—a position of which he was immensely proud, never tiring of recounting the great receptions he used to receive all over the country. In his better days he was a well-known figure at the Saturday evening concerts in the City Hall, Glasgow, under the auspices of the Abstainers' Union. There his appearances invariably evoked an ovation—partly, no doubt, jocular, but mostly genuine. One of his favourite "encores" was "The Masons' Apron," which he gave with great verve. His most memorable appearance in Blairgowrie was as leader of a score or so of fiddlers some time in the sixties or early seventies. After a solo display it was his habit, much as the acrobats, who ostentatiously bow an invitation to bestow applause after each feat,

Duncan M'Kercher, Dunkeld.

to throw up his arms with fiddle and bow, as if to say, "There noo, did ye ever hear it better dune?"—which never failed to fetch the audience and produce the inevitable encore. An incident connected with the Blairgowrie concert was one of the stock stories of that jolly landlord, the late Duncan Macdonald, of the Queen's Hotel, who used to relate with great gusto how his namesake and others were having a jorum of toddy in the billiard-room after the performance, when the "Atholl Paganini," who was rather short-sighted, mistaking a lump of cue-chalk for sugar, put it into his tumbler, and could not make out why his toddy was so drumly and its taste so wersh. Regarding his style, it may be stated that it differed greatly from Niel's. The latter used his bow like a veritable Jupiter *tonans*, rolling out strathspey and reel with a power and resonance which some one likened to an "organ at full gallop," whereas Duncan's short, "nippity" style of bowing provoked the undisguised contempt of such players as Jamie Allan, whose "wondrous length of arm" required a bow an inch longer than ordinary players, and who used to refer to "that d——d diddrie-fa style o' M'Kercher's!" The latter, however, was

QUITE ABLE TO SQUARE THE ACCOUNT

in his own favour, and was known to go the length of encouraging his pupils with the remark—"Hooch, ay, laddie, but ye'll be a grand fiddler yet! Ye're very near as guid's mysel' already, and far afore M'Leish!" That was William M'Leish, of Aberfeldy—Duncan's bete noire—an excellent player, composer, and teacher, amongst his pupils being Mr Troup, of Ballater. He was born at Aberfeldy in 1807,

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

and died there in 1890. Him our friend Duncan could not thole on any account. Duncan himself posed as a composer of dance music, and published two collections in 1830. Well-read musical critics have found points of more than usual interest in these volumes; they go the length of asserting that the reputed author had very little to do with their contents. The first of the books is entitled "A Collection of Original Strathspeys and Reels, Arranged for the Pianoforte, Violin, and Violoncello," and is "respectfully dedicated to the Highland Society of Scotland by D. M'Kercher." It consists of twenty-two pages, and contains 52 tunes. Both Mr Troup and Mr J. S. Marshall, Carnoustie, as well as others, are of opinion that the majority of the tunes are not M'Kercher's at all, but those of Captain Daniel Menzies, who was born about 1790 and died about 1828, and was a composer of acknowledged merit. From a correspondence on the subject, which took place between Mr Marshall, the late Mr Buttar Malcolm, Perth, and the late Rev. Alexander Duff, Kirriemuir, it appears that Mr Duncan Duff, father of the last named, a well-known teacher in King James' Hospital School, Perth, and who died in the early seventies, was an intimate friend of Captain Menzies, and not only recognised his tunes in M'Kercher's "original" collections, but openly accused him of having stolen them. He told Mr Buttar Malcolm that he met M'Kercher one day at the corner of the South Street, Perth, and during a violent altercation arising out of the accusation was "only with difficulty restrained from giving him (M'Kercher) a castigation." It is supposed that "Pag." had had the MSS. on loan at the Captain's death, and been tempted

Duncan M'Kercher, Dunkeld.

to include them in his collection. The style of the majority of the tunes is very different from that the old fiddler was partial to, being much on the lines of R. M'Intosh's, Duncan M'Intosh's and William Marshall's compositions. It is a curious circumstance that he was never known to play his own music in public—which is very much opposed to both custom and natural inclination—with the single exception of “George IV.'s Welcome to Scotland”—one of the easiest strathspeys in the books.

THE LAST APPEARANCE

of our “Atholl Paganini”—he got the title from Fox Maule in one of his jocular moods, and was very proud of it—was at one of Lumsden's concerts in November 1873. He was rather low in health at the time, but became seriously ill thereafter, and finished his course in Collinton Poorhouse a month later. James Stewart, the well-known poet of Perth, Crieff, and Dunkeld, hit off the characteristics of the old fiddler very neatly in his “Duncan Ker,” which follows. Every one who knew the subject of the poem declared the portrait perfect, but old “Pag.” himself was anything but partial to it.

DUNCAN KER,

THE ATHOLL PAGANINI.

Hark! the tweedledum!
That bow hand hath fleetness,
Gusts o' music come,
Rich in Highland sweetness.
Hearts an' heels bestir—
Rise, my bonny hinny,
Dance to Duncan Ker,
The Atholl Paganini!

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

The bridal ha' is lit,
Brikers round are foamin',
Licht the dancers flit,
As the wind o' gloamin';
Bobbin' through the reel
Like a water-waggie;
"Play," cries ilka chiel',
"Tullochgorum, Pagie!"

A bonnet meets his broo,
Thistle-badged an' cockit,
Round him a surtout,
I' the fashion—dokit.
Short's a plant o' fir,
Onything but scraggie,
Such is Duncan Ker,
Atholl's famous Pagie.

A civil body, Pag,
Pleasant on his fiddle,
Whistle, cry, or wag—
At your beck he'll triddle;
Seat him on a firm
Near a whisky kaggie,
The mavis canna chirm
Sweeter notes than Pagie.

Bridals, balls, and ploys,
Haud the bottle clunkin';
They wha then rejoice
Need the aid o' Duncan,
Dull wad be the stir
To Highland Jock an' Maggie
Wantin' Dhonnach Ker,
Atholl's famous Pagie.

Fastly flee the clouds.
Driven by the storm;
Faster sorrow howds
Ilka gait before 'im;
Weel may we infer,
A' his days are sunny—
Wha's like Duncan Ker,
The Atholl Paganini?

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